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35th plenary meeting
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New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda items 43 and 42

Culture of Peace: one day of plenary meetings to review progress made in the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action and the observance of the Decade at its midpoint

Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/201)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/60/279)

Draft resolutions (A/60/L.4 and A/60/L.5)

Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/259)

Draft resolution (A/60/L.6)

The President: At the world summit in mid-September, our leaders reaffirmed the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, as well as the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action, adopted by the General Assembly. They also committed themselves to taking action to promote a culture of peace and a dialogue at the local, national, regional and international levels.

This is the background for today's debate. It is thus not only topical, but of political relevance as well, that you, the Member States, will be called upon to provide guidance on the follow-up to the outcome document in this regard. Our deliberations are based on three reports, including one prepared by UNESCO on the midterm global review of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010 (*see A/60/279*).

According to the Declaration on a Culture of Peace, adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, in 1999, the culture of peace is a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflict by attacking their root causes, solving problems through dialogue and negotiation. A culture of peace is based on respect for human rights, democracy and tolerance, the promotion of development, education for peace, the free flow of information and the wider participation of women as an integral element preventing violence and conflict. In fact, many of the day-to-day activities of the United Nations aim to contribute to a culture of peace.

The observance of the Decade has now reached its midpoint. This is an opportunity to take stock of progress and to provide new impetus, focus and energy for the second half of the Decade. We need to ask ourselves, what have been promising and effective practices and approaches? Have we succeeded in bringing all stakeholders on board, including all United Nations agencies, funds and programmes? Have Governments done enough over the past five years to foster peace and non-violence at all levels? What more can be done to encourage civil society and the private

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sector to increase their role in support of a culture of peace that must be rooted in the minds and hearts of people, and especially those of young people?

Our concrete task ahead is to ensure that we continue to find the most effective ways to operationalize efforts to strengthen a culture of peace. Particular emphasis should not only be placed on the mechanism of collaboration, but also on the substantive areas of engagements, not least education; I emphasize, not least education.

In addition, we must define more effective ways to work with civil society and non-governmental organizations, the media and the private sector, in order to ensure strong and coherent action throughout the Decade. There are also new aspects that had not entered the international debate at the time the General Assembly adopted the Declaration and Plan of Action. One of those aspects pertains to cultural diversity. In the summit outcome document, our leaders acknowledged the diversity of the world and recognized that all cultures and civilizations contribute to the enrichment of humankind. They also acknowledged the importance of respect for religious and cultural diversity throughout the world. Religious dialogue is being increasingly recognized for its contribution, not only to the objectives of the culture of peace, but also to the dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples.

This leads me to the other matter on the agenda for today's plenary meeting, the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. The report of the Secretary-General reveals an emerging consensus on an overarching framework for effective dialogue-related activities. The framework consists of universally shared values, cutting across all cultures and civilizations, especially tolerance, mutual understanding and observance of human rights and democratic governance.

The major challenge for us all is to translate pledges to adhere to these values into concrete action through a variety of practical initiatives, as called for in the Programme of Action for the Dialogue among Civilizations. Here I would like to welcome the initiative by the Secretary-General to launch the Alliance of Civilizations on 14 July 2005, as proposed by the prime ministers of Spain and Turkey. This action aims to address the need for a concerted effort by the international community at both the institutional and civil society levels to bridge divides and overcome the prejudice, misperceptions and polarization that undermine trust and potentially threaten international security. We live in a world of much distrust and suspicion. We must mobilize the political will to change negative trends, in order to prevent polarization and pessimism. Strengthening a culture of peace, fostering interreligious dialogue and continuing the Dialogue among Civilizations will contribute to enhancing hope and belief in the future.

I should like to add that there is also a clear relationship between this work and our continuing United Nations reform process. The fact that we are discussing these three concepts together today in a plenary meeting of the General Assembly is an approach to nurture in the years to come. I hope that our discussions today will lead towards concrete and sustained action and strengthen our efforts to reach a truly global culture of peace and a meaningful Dialogue among Civilizations, cultures and peoples of our world.

I start by giving the floor to the representative of Bangladesh to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/60/L.5.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): I wish to begin, Mr. President, by expressing our deep appreciation to you for organizing this day-long celebration of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010. The timing is important, because it coincides with the midpoint of the Decade, as you have yourself just observed in your opening statement.

I am sure the deliberations today, under your able stewardship, Sir, will further strengthen our resolve to promote a culture of peace, one that brings peoples closer across cultures, civilizations and faiths and that, we hope, will create a world order where amity supplants atrocity, harmony overcomes hatred and understanding replaces intolerance.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/60/201). Appreciation is also owed to the Director-General of UNESCO for his continued and relentless efforts in this regard.

Recent history has witnessed a series of triumphs that humanity can justly take pride in. These have involved the ending of colonialism, the limiting of autocracy, the strengthening of democratic values and

institutions, the rise of liberalism and enhanced partnership between Governments and civil society in development.

Sadly, however, the period has not been without its share of tragedies. We have experienced unspeakable violence wreaked by war, terror and conflict, bringing death, destruction and suffering to millions.

The adoption of the Millennium Declaration provided us a unique opportunity to reinvigorate our endeavours. It constituted, among other things, a bill of human rights shaped by certain universal beliefs that would promote peace, development, dialogue, inclusion, equity, justice and tolerance. Our leaders endorsed those at the 2005 world summit. They mandated us to advance all initiatives in that respect. Our present effort is in consonance with their desires — indeed, with their decisions.

We believe that humanity, irrespective of an individual's culture, civilization or faith, shares many common values. We should focus on those to build the connecting bridges, to close the gaps and to fasten the links. It would be in our collective interest to devote our resources and capacities, intellectual and material, in favour of that campaign.

Bangladesh has been at the forefront of initiatives that promote greater understanding and tolerance among peoples. In our belief, that is achievable through dialogue and cooperation. My country was born of a bloody conflict. We therefore see great value in principles of tolerance, respect for diversity, democracy and understanding. Those ideals were endorsed by the membership in 1999 in the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (*resolution 53/243*). Bangladesh was privileged to steer that process.

The Programme of Action identifies major areas of focus: education; sustainable economic and social development; human rights; equality between men and women; democratic participation; advancing understanding, tolerance and solidarity; participatory communication and free flow of information and knowledge; and international peace and security. Specific actions are set out in each area that would help bring our goals to fruition.

In a spirit of inclusiveness, Bangladesh has always welcomed all initiatives that seek to promote such dialogue and understanding. We believe that all of these initiatives are mutually reinforcing. We also believe that the participation of all actors — Governments, international organizations, civil society, non-governmental organizations, young people, the private sector, community leaders, religious leaders, teachers, artists, journalists and humanitarian workers — is essential to realize our universal goal of a peaceful world, a world where we will be able to solve our problems through convergence of ideas rather than through confrontation.

While we promote a culture of peace and all such initiatives, we do not pretend that those objectives can be achieved in a vacuum. To make peace sustainable, it is imperative to create the right conditions for our peoples to live in dignity and in freedom from want and fear. All prevailing political, economic and socio-cultural injustices must also be addressed.

Bangladesh has always sought to play an important role in the maintenance of international peace and security. Our commitment to United Nations peacekeeping remains unflinching. Bangladesh has contributed some 39,000 peacekeepers so far, to 24 United Nations peacekeeping operations. More than 70 soldiers have made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty, to uphold United Nations values.

At home, on the domestic matrix, Bangladesh has been undergoing a quiet revolution. This is in the field of socio-economic development, maintaining growth in gross domestic product of over 5 per cent over two decades, raising per capita income, maintaining food security, increasing resilience to meet natural disasters, improving the human development index, enhancing gender parity and improving social and health indicators. We have pressed our indigenous intellectual resources to the service of development. Ideas such as microcredit and non-formal education — whose time has surely come — have been replicated widely. We believe that a world order that is informed by a culture of peace is conducive to the attainment of our development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A strengthened global partnership is, therefore, the call of the hour.

At this midpoint of the Decade, we wish to express our gratitude to all actors that have contributed to the promotion of such a culture. We applaud in this connection the role of UNESCO. Appreciation is also

due to other involved organizations which lie within and outside the United Nations system.

We are particularly thankful to civil society, including non-governmental organizations and young people. Their enthusiastic support to this cause has made a huge difference. Our special thanks go to the Fundación Cultura de Paz for its commendable work in compiling a report on the progress achieved by over 700 organizations from more than 100 countries, including my own. We urge all of them to continue their good work.

We believe that the promotion of a culture of peace is of paramount importance. This is more so today, when conflicts bred of misunderstanding and intolerance dot our globe. It is in this perspective that I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of a large number of delegations — actually 105 sponsors — the draft resolution entitled "International decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010", contained in document A/60/L.5. Additional sponsors continue to come forward. For instance, Brunei Darussalam and Marshall Islands have now joined us.

The draft resolution contains some technical updates vis-à-vis the resolution of the previous year (resolution 59/143). It contains the following additional elements: First, it takes note of the 2005 world summit outcome document adopted at the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly (resolution 60/1). Secondly, it commends civil society, including non-governmental organizations and young people, for their activities in further promoting a culture of peace and non-violence, including through their campaign to raise awareness on a culture of peace. Here it takes note of the progress achieved by more than 700 organizations in more than 100 countries. And thirdly, it requests the Secretary-General, as agreed in the 2005 world summit outcome document, to explore enhancing mechanisms for the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

This draft resolution bears the enthusiastic seal of over 106 nations. They constitute an overwhelming majority in this House. They represent not just the voice — that too — but the aspirations of teeming billions. Some day — and this is more than a fond wish and is indeed a strong belief — a draft resolution on this item will carry the sponsorship of each and every delegation.

That is also our hope, for hope is what sustains us in adversity, stimulates our belief in life and encourages us to forge ahead. Also, this is not too tall an order. For has it not been aptly said that man's reach should exceed his grasp, for what else are the heavens for?

I hope that the Assembly will adopt the draft resolution without a vote.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to introduce draft resolution A/60/L.6.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to commence by expressing our satisfaction that the General Assembly is addressing, in a joint debate, two very important items concerning the culture of peace and the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his reports (*A/60/201*, *A/60/259*) and for his unwavering commitment to the advancement of those lofty initiatives.

The international community has never been in more dire and urgent need of a concerted effort to promote a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations than it is today. Their significance was rightly recognized in the outcome document (*resolution 60/1*) of the recently concluded summit, which reaffirmed the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace and the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action, as well as other initiatives on dialogue among cultures and civilizations.

The challenges that we all face are indeed multifaceted, and the old approaches based on power and exclusion have proved to be insufficient and, in most cases, inappropriate. Such approaches have even led to the exacerbation of tension by widening the divide, marginalizing and alienating significant portions of the global population, and providing fertile grounds for the spread of hatred, bigotry and violence. The perceived need for real — or even manufactured — enemies as a managerial tool has, in fact, transformed the nightmare of a clash of civilizations from a theoretical construct into a real possibility.

The desire of the international community to break away from the paradigm of exclusion was demonstrated by the unanimous designation of 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. A new paradigm should replace the outdated mode of analysis and behaviour, because today there is greater appreciation of our common vulnerability to threats ranging from terrorism and weapons of mass destruction to poverty and environmental degradation. Indeed, in the era of globalization, those menaces recognize no boundaries of geography, power or affluence. And it is thus hoped that the collective management of our common vulnerabilities is emerging as a better tool for global governance than perceived or imaginary enemies.

A new paradigm rests on the proposition that the sources of knowledge and wisdom are inherently diversified, that each civilization has much to offer and that inclusion will bring with it mutual enrichment and benefit. Resolution 56/6, on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, adopted four years ago by the General Assembly, aptly defines the foundations of that emerging paradigm as "inclusion, and a collective desire to learn, uncover and examine assumptions, unfold shared meaning and core values and integrate multiple perspectives through dialogue" (part A, article 1). That is further elaborated by the Secretary-General's Group of Eminent Persons on Dialogue among Civilizations, which noted in its publication, *Crossing the Divide: Dialogue among Civilizations*,

> "Dialogue brings with it equal footing ... as it is a process by which we accept, as much as we want to be accepted. We include, as much as we want to be included. We listen, as much as we want to be listened to.
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> "In these terms, dialogue can perhaps eventually usher in a new paradigm of global relations because it challenges the old paradigm. ... dialogue can be a framework where the weakest is accorded the privilege to be listened to, and where the strongest finds it necessary to explain its case to others."

Such a paradigm shift would, in fact, be a requirement for attaining the lofty objectives of larger freedom, development, security and human rights for all, and it needs to become the prevailing discourse of the new century if we want to leave our future generations with a more secure and prosperous world than the one we inherited. Strengthening the culture of dialogue among civilizations will prove to be a most important element in combating the calamities of the day, in particular terrorism. For terrorism seeks to make the diversity among nations the source of conflict, while dialogue among civilizations can help to make that very diversity the foundation for cooperation and collective betterment.

The Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action marked a milestone in our collective effort to embark on this self-evident yet innovative approach. Since its adoption, it has progressively mobilized greater interest by Member States, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and international and regional institutions.

Many countries, international and regional organizations, civil society and non-governmental organizations and the United Nations system, in particular UNESCO, have already submitted reports of their impressive activities in that regard to the Secretary-General. As the Secretary-General indicated in his report in document A/60/259, those submissions suggest that the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations has provided the framework for various innovative approaches to promoting greater understanding and constructive interaction among peoples of diverse cultural backgrounds.

In that context, UNESCO has substantially contributed to the implementation of the Global Agenda by including it in its Medium-term Strategy for 2002-2007 with a view to achieving its strategic objective of safeguarding cultural diversity and encouraging dialogue among cultures and civilizations.

The General Assembly laid a solid foundation for institutionalizing, promoting and facilitating dialogue among civilizations through its resolution 53/22. Since the fifty-third session, the idea has been increasingly embraced by many around the globe. The designation of 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and the adoption of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action were indeed major initiatives to enhance dialogue and understanding at the beginning of the new millennium. Those endeavours demonstrated the collective resolve of the international community to begin the millennium with a fresh approach to global

interactions and the determination to build a better tomorrow for future generations.

The time has come once again for the Assembly, as the sole universal body encompassing the representatives of nearly every nation on Earth, to further strengthen this emerging and promising paradigm by taking another step through the adoption of the draft resolution before us. It is therefore a great honour and privilege for me to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/60/L.6, entitled "Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations". I do so on behalf of the sponsors of the draft resolution, which, in addition to the 67 delegations mentioned in the draft, now include Andorra, Argentina, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Mongolia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Panama, Poland, Peru, San Marino, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, the Syrian Arab Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Tunisia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The draft resolution takes stock of the achievements already accomplished and seeks to further advance the concept and its global implementation. It reiterates that dialogue among civilizations is a process between and within civilizations, founded on inclusion and a collective desire to learn, uncover and examine assumptions, unfold shared meanings and core values and integrate multiple perspectives through dialogue. It also emphasizes that the hearts and minds of the next generation are the real object of dialogue among civilizations.

The draft resolution welcomes the numerous initiatives and efforts to further promote dialogue among civilizations adopted by States, the United Nations system, international and regional organizations, civil society and non-governmental organizations. It also recognizes the contribution of different initiatives on dialogue among cultures and civilizations, including the dialogue on interfaith cooperation and the initiative of the Alliance of Civilizations.

The draft resolution invites States, international and regional organizations and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, to develop appropriate ways and means at the local, national, regional and international levels to further promote dialogue and mutual understanding among civilizations, and to report on their activities to the Secretary-General. Finally, by this draft resolution the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General to explore enhancing implementation mechanisms of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform members that following consultations, the text of the eleventh preambular paragraph of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilization (resolution 56/6) has now been added to the draft resolution following the fifth preambular paragraph, and the text of the thirteenth preambular paragraph of the Global Agenda has been added following operative paragraph 4, with the words "Underlining the fact" replaced by the words "Reaffirms further" and the word "recognizing" replaced by the word "recognizes". Those paragraphs are being distributed to all delegations for ease of reference.

The Islamic Republic of Iran and other sponsors are confident that the draft resolution contained in document A/60/L.6, as orally revised, will be endorsed unanimously by the General Assembly. That will be a clear affirmation by the international community of the shared commitment to advance the principles and objectives of dialogue, as well as our resolve to ensure that the world we will pass on to our children will be one of dialogue and not of clashes, one of communication and not of violence.

Before concluding, I would like to thank all those who sponsored the draft resolution and who, by providing us with their valuable comments and viewpoints, contributed to the strength of its message.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines to introduce draft resolution A/60/L.4.

Mr. Baja (Philippines): On behalf of my delegation, allow me once again to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at this historic session. My delegation

pledges its full cooperation to you and the other members of the General Committee.

The Philippines is gratified to note that, in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (*resolution 60/1*), world leaders reaffirmed the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (*resolution 53/243*) as well as the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (*resolution 56/6*) and its Programme of Action, adopted by the General Assembly, and the value of different initiatives on dialogue among cultures and civilizations, including the dialogue on interfaith cooperation. They also requested the Secretary-General to explore enhancing implementation mechanisms and to follow up on those initiatives.

In order to assist efforts to explore implementation mechanisms and to follow up on those initiatives, the Philippines is pleased to introduce, on behalf of the other sponsors, draft resolution A/60/L.4, entitled "Promotion of interreligious dialogue and cooperation for peace". The draft resolution updates last year's resolution (59/23), incorporating new elements to reflect developments in the field since the General Assembly's adoption by consensus last year of that Philippines-initiated resolution, entitled "Promotion of interreligious dialogue". In particular, several significant events since then have endorsed the importance of interreligious dialogue and cooperation for the promotion of peace. My delegation would like to mention some of them.

In December, Albania hosted the Tirana Regional Summit on Interreligious and Interethnic Dialogue in South-East Europe, in which 13 leaders from the region participated and which culminated in the adoption of the Tirana Summit Declaration.

In April, a conference was held in Melbourne Australia, on the theme "Religion in peace and conflict: responding to militancy and fundamentalism". At that conference representatives from 15 countries of South-East Asia and the Pacific region adopted the Melbourne Declaration.

In June, at the second South Summit of the 132 member countries of the Group of 77, held in Qatar, participating leaders adopted the Doha Declaration in which they recognized

> "that the respect for religious and cultural diversity in an increasingly globalizing world contributes to international cooperation, promotes enhanced dialogue among religions, cultures and civilizations, and helps to create an environment conducive to exchange of human experience".

Foreign ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) also met in Doha last June and adopted the NAM Ministerial Declaration, in which they

> "expressed the view that the promotion of a culture of peace, dialogue among civilizations and interreligious cooperation are some of the significant measures and approaches that could contribute towards international peace, security and harmony".

Another significant development was the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Interfaith Dialogue held in Bali, Indonesia, on 21 and 22 July 2005 on the theme "Building interfaith harmony within the international community". ASEM membership comes from the European Union and South-East and North-East Asian countries. The Bali Declaration acknowledged the importance of interfaith dialogue and cooperation among United Nations initiatives in promoting the culture of peace, the inclusion of interfaith studies in post-elementary curricula, the education of grass-roots communities on pluralism and diversity and the need for close cooperation between Government and civil society sectors to share best practices and promote interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

The tripartite Conference on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace was held in June at the United Nations, sponsored by 16 Governments, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Bank and the 110-member Committee of Religious Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) at the United Nations. The outcome of that historic conference was circulated in document A/60/269, which I commend for transmittal by representatives to their capitals, to afford them the opportunity to consider its conclusions and recommendations.

The ASEAN Regional Forum, the only security-oriented organization in Asia, adopted a Chairman's statement on 29 July 2005 in Vientianne. The Ministers welcomed the enhancement of interfaith dialogues aimed at promoting mutual understanding and trust among people in the region.

At the margins of the world summit last month, an Informal Meeting of Leaders on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace was held at United Nations Headquarters on 13 September 2005. The 15 participating leaders adopted a declaration highlighting mutually inclusive and mutually reinforcing interreligious, intercultural and inter-civilizational initiatives, all designed to promote peace at the local, national, regional and international levels.

That informal summit on interfaith cooperation was followed by the Security Council summit, held on 14 September 2005, chaired by the President of the Philippines. At the summit the Council adopted its resolution 1624 (2005), which "[c]alls upon all States to continue international efforts to enhance dialogue and broaden understanding among civilizations, in an effort to prevent the indiscriminate targeting of different religions and cultures" (*para. 3*).

There are equally significant initiatives at the regional and international levels, such as Pakistan's "enlightened moderation", endorsed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference; the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, hosted by Kazakhstan; the 2006 world summit on Islamic-Christian dialogue to be held in Senegal; and, of course, the Alliance of Civilizations launched by the Secretary-General in July.

These developments are eloquent affirmations of the value of draft resolution A/60/L.4, which I commend for adoption by consensus. The draft resolution takes into account the growing universal clamour for dialogue to avert misunderstanding and conflict.

The draft resolution takes a step forward by recognizing the mutually inclusive and mutually reinforcing linkages of the various interreligious, intercultural and inter-civilization initiatives for the promotion of peace. It also invites the Secretary-General to submit a report on ways to strengthen linkages and focus more on practical options in the implementation of the initiatives on interreligious dialogue and cooperation for peace.

We are confident that the various interreligious, intercultural and inter-civilization initiatives will grow into a process or mechanism for conflict prevention and for the pacific settlement of disputes, a mechanism against terrorism and a mechanism for peace.

Mr. Thomson (United Kingdom): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 25 countries of the European Union, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Croatia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Iceland, Ukraine and Moldova align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes the opportunity provided at the midpoint of this International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World to reaffirm the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (*resolution 53/243*).

The European Union also expresses its full support for the other ongoing related activities on interfaith and intercultural dialogue in this area, such as the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action. Further, the European Union also welcomes the recent initiative of the Alliance of Civilizations, announced by the Secretary-General in July this year. The Permanent Representative of the Philippines, in his statement just a moment ago, listed many more such initiatives. Each one of these can contribute to the common platform of unity which the international community must build in order to challenge the growing forces of extremism and sectarianism, which threaten all our daily lives.

Who could have imagined at the start of this International Decade the challenges to a culture of peace that the world is facing today? As a counter to extremism and terrorism, we must choose to celebrate the values that unite us. In order to undermine those who seek to sow division and chaos we must strive to develop tolerant and inclusive societies. We must celebrate how diversity enriches our societies. We must improve understanding amongst faiths and cultures, and we must foster stronger respect between communities.

Respect, tolerance and dignity are cornerstones in creating the conditions for a safe, secure and peaceful world in which all can realize their full potential as human beings. Those principles of respect, tolerance and dignity are also intrinsic to developing a culture of peace, as outlined in article 3 of the Declaration.

Full respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, for democracy and for the rule of law, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is essential if we are to promote and protect those values

common to humanity. And whilst working to promote those aims, we must also defend against those who seek to undermine those values. We must act against those that incite and promote extremism. It is our duty to do so.

Governments need to work with and through their home communities. We must encourage and empower mainstream voices to challenge the extremists with a more powerful message, one that reaffirms our values of tolerance and respect. That effort must go hand in hand with work to tackle inequality, poverty and injustice. We must do more to improve opportunity, pursue good governance and entrench universal human rights. Making a practical difference in people's lives by promoting rights and ensuring their implementation can only help to support our pursuit of tolerance and peace.

Education has a critical role to play in this regard. Good-quality education provides a foundation for genuine dialogue among peoples. As the outcome document of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly entitled, "A world fit for children", reminds us, children are "resourceful citizens capable of helping to build a better future for all" (*resolution S-27/2, annex, para. 7*).

The European Union is committed to empowering children and young people to express themselves. In that regard, we reaffirm our commitment to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (resolution 50/81, annex) and its five new priority areas. Across the European Union, there are an increasing number of youth programmes aimed at developing cooperation on a wide range of activities between young people in different member States and beyond. Bringing together young people from different backgrounds and from different countries helps combat negative prejudices and stereotypes. Young people are key to creating the tolerant society in which we all want to live. Young people must be considered part of the solution.

The European Union pays particular tribute to the United Network of Young Peacebuilders, a global network of young people and youth organizations active in the field of peacebuilding. Their work is an example to us all and evidence of the significant role that civil society can play in advancing a culture of peace. In that regard, the European Union welcomes the World Report on the Culture of Peace prepared by over 700 civil society organizations. It is an important contribution to assessing the review of progress made in the last five years.

Finally, the European Union pays tribute to the work of UNESCO as lead agency for the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. UNESCO's commitment to fostering a culture of peace in its fields of competence is as relevant now as ever, and we urge UNESCO to pursue greater synergy across the United Nations system in order to achieve visible results.

The European Union also pays particular tribute to UNESCO's work in elaborating the draft Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions. We welcome the adoption of that international Convention at the 33rd session of the UNESCO General Conference. We urge Member States to ratify it as early as possible.

Mr. Kitaoka (Japan): Sixty years have passed since the United Nations was established, with — as it is expressed in the Preamble of the Charter — the determination "to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours". And four years have now passed since the General Assembly adopted resolution 56/6, entitled "Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations", making the year 2001 the year of dialogue among civilizations.

Today, however, there are still problems that cause people everywhere great concern. Conflict and confrontation arising from racial or religious differences persist around the world. Globalization, which can bring different civilizations closer, contributes many benefits to society but can also give rise to intolerance among people when they come into contact with civilizations different from their own, without preparation. In order to deal with that unfortunate situation, it is of great importance to promote dialogue among peoples and civilizations, based on a spirit of tolerance and mutual understanding.

At the 2005 world summit in September, leaders reaffirmed that all cultures and civilizations have contributed to the advancement of humankind. They acknowledged the importance of respect and understanding for religious and cultural diversity throughout the world and committed themselves to promoting a culture of peace and dialogue at the local, regional and international levels. It is our responsibility to achieve that goal. Japan, for its part, believes that

the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations has played a key role in the promotion of understanding among peoples and cultures around the world and has thus contributed to the further development of a culture of peace.

In that regard, my delegation highly commends UNESCO for the major role it played in implementing the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. UNESCO included the Global Agenda in its medium-term strategy for 2002-2007, with a view to achieving its strategic objective of safeguarding cultural diversity and encouraging dialogue among cultures and civilizations. Within that framework, UNESCO has organized and sponsored a broad range of activities, conferences and meetings, such as the April 2005 International Conference on the Dialogue among Civilizations, Cultures and Peoples in Paris, as well as regional symposiums and conferences on the dialogue among civilizations.

In that context, I welcome the adoption of the Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions on 17 October by Commission IV of the 33rd UNESCO General Conference. We believe the Convention will protect and promote cultural diversity by providing a far-reaching framework. I believe that respect for cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue is one of the surest guarantees of development and peace.

Japan believes that, as affirmed by the report of the Secretary-General on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (A/60/259), of August 2005, a global partnership is urgently needed and that concrete action should be taken through practical initiatives to further promote dialogue among civilizations. Aside from the activities of UNESCO, Japan also welcomes the various initiatives promoted by Member States to implement the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. It welcomes, among other initiatives, the Alliance of Civilizations launched on 14 July 2005 by the Secretary-General.

Throughout its history, my country has been fortunate enough to be exposed to — and has accepted — various civilizations, such as those from China and India and, in modern times, Western civilization. Japan has been successful in coexisting with different cultures while maintaining its own identity. Japan, recognizing the great benefits of cultural diversity, attaches importance to interaction among people and acknowledges the importance of understanding each other's culture and civilization and of fostering mutual understanding through dialogue.

With that in mind, Japan attaches special importance to exchanges among young people, who will have leading roles in the international community in the new era. Through youth invitation schemes, such as the Global Youth Exchange Programme, Japan intends to make further efforts in promoting mutual understanding to transcend the differences in cultures and languages.

In January 2001, in response to the proclamation of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, Japan launched a new initiative seeking to further enhance mutual understanding between Japan and Islamic countries, as part of the effort to promote dialogue among civilizations. Since then, Japan has actively undertaken a series of efforts to deepen understanding among cultures and civilizations through dialogues such as the Japan-Middle East Cultural Exchanges and Dialogue Mission, the Arab-Japan Dialogue Forum and seminars on the dialogue among civilizations between the Islamic world and Japan.

Based on the experience accumulated through those culture- and region-specific dialogues, Japan decided to organize a conference with a much broader perspective. At the Asian-African Summit in April 2005, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi stated that it was critical to share our experiences and our knowledge through dialogues between civilizations, cultures and individuals. To that end, he offered to host the World Civilization Forum so that all countries might share their experiences and preserve their traditions, while, at the same time, advancing their own modernization.

At that Forum, held in July 2005 in Tokyo, Professor Amartya Sen, the Forum's chairman, pointed out, in his opening address at the Forum, that distinctions solely based on civilizations made little sense, because we are defined by a variety of concerns and thus cannot be reduced to a single set of features. Instead, we must see the richness of the human condition. He argued that, in that sense, the Forum was not about a dialogue among civilizations, but about a global dialogue among people striving to address the problems and the grievances of the world. The Forum provided an opportunity for Governments, private

enterprise, academia and civil society to share a common awareness of the issues and to form networks to promote interaction in serious discussions on today's situation. Japan acknowledges the absolute virtue of dialogue and peace and, accordingly, would like to continue its efforts to promote them.

In the years to come, we will have to continue our labours, in close cooperation with each other, to expand dialogue and exchange views among civilizations. I would therefore like to conclude my statement by reiterating that Japan is determined to redouble its efforts to bring about a culture of peace.

Mr. Elbadri (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): A number of international events have stressed the importance of the culture of peace, which consists of the thought, the values, the codes of conduct that are based on respect for peace and human rights and other fundamental values that we have adopted as a way of life. The culture of peace is no longer a political luxury; it has become a political necessity. It is necessary for security, as well as being a human responsibility. That is the true essence of the concept of collective security, which must begin with us, as individuals and representative of our peoples and Governments.

We must respect the lofty human values reflected in the international legal frameworks that we have created to govern international relations. They must be based on equality and common standards that can provide real security for all peoples and all countries. Peace can be built on the basis of a balance between rights and obligations.

There can be no peace without communication among religions, cultures and civilizations and without respect on the part of peoples and Governments for the cultures and the fundamental rights of others. We must realize that we live in a world that has a civilizational continuum — a world in which our differences are a key element of our diversity. We have one human heritage, but culturally, civilizationally and intellectually we are very diverse.

Despite the various contributions to the human heritage made by a number of civilizations, we must take into account in particular the contributions made by the Islamic civilization. In recent years, there have been many initiatives in that respect, and there are prominent indications that global awareness is growing, as evidenced by the adoption of the 2001 Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations contained in General Assembly resolution 56/6, as well as the Secretary-General's declaration of the Alliance of Civilizations last July.

If we approach such initiatives in a sincere manner, we will all be able to benefit from the dialogue among civilizations and cultures within an effective institutional international framework, based on clarity of vision, objectives and means.

We believe profoundly in the importance of dialogue among cultures and civilizations with a view to strengthening world peace and building bridges between peoples. However, such dialogue must be based on a number of basic elements and pillars, including respect for cultural and intellectual diversity and specificity and religious differences among others. It must rely on dialogue as the foundation to enhance such respect for the uniqueness of others. Such dialogue must be aimed at strengthening our common values and common heritage through cooperation and integration, so as to arrive at a cultural and religious rapprochement, which can provide a solid foundation for progress. We must also expand the basis of that dialogue to supplement traditional frameworks, including at the intergovernmental and inter-academic levels.

People must be brought closer together, along with all stakeholders and sectors, as the report of the Secretary-General makes clear. We must avoid the politicization of the dialogue among peoples and civilizations. The dialogue should not be used in the service of political causes, nor should different yardsticks and selectivity be used. Policies must be aimed at bringing people together, rather than at pushing them apart.

We must remember the primacy of religion. All religions try to elevate and glorify human beings. We must not stigmatize any religion, or consider that one particular religion might lead to more violence and terror than another. We know that the universal message of all religions is tolerance and respect for and protection of life and dignity.

The role of States at the national level is the key to enhancing the culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations. Egypt made clear its acceptance of the culture of peace on several occasions before recognizing it at the international level. Egypt was the first State to reach out towards peace in the Middle East through President Anwar Sadat's 1977 peace

initiative, since we believe that peace is the very foundation of coexistence. That initiative was the starting point of the various peace processes in the Middle East, which are continuing, despite various problems and obstacles in recent years.

In that context, Egypt was one of the first States to adopt the Global Agenda and Programme of Action for a dialogue among civilizations adopted by the General Assembly, and major efforts and progress have been made to implement that Programme of Action, particularly by enhancing educational programmes in Egypt to strengthen the culture of peace, freedom, tolerance, and human rights and to consolidate the principles of democracy, pluralism and fundamental freedoms and to expand the participatory basis of all peoples in the implementation of our national programmes and goals.

Egypt was also a forerunner in the process of enhancing the culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations in the Arab region through its very active role in the League of Arab States. The Library of Alexandria is a very important institution in terms of enhancing the dialogue among civilizations and respect for democracy and human rights. That Library received the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation award, whose goals include projecting the common heritage of the Mediterranean region by strengthening links and dialogue between the north and the south of the Mediterranean Sea.

With regard to the Secretary-General's optimistic report on the implementation of the Programme of Action relating to the dialogue among civilizations and the culture of peace and the report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which contains many constructive proposals, further efforts are required on the international level in order to consolidate the foundations of the culture of peace. Many regions of the world are still involved in war or are under foreign occupation. Many people are suffering from poverty, hunger and disease, and many are subject to unfair international economic and trade practices that fail to take into account the needs and requirements of the developing countries, despite the acknowledgement of the firm interrelation between development and security.

Likewise, democracy is often implemented within States, but seldom at the international level. Thus we must revisit our practices and conduct, enhance mutual understanding and joint work in order to reverse the current trend.

Egypt hopes that someday the world will realize that the year 2000 was not the only year during which the Culture of Peace should be observed, and that 21 September should not be considered the only day to commemorate peace each year. We believe that every year must be a Year of the Culture of Peace and that every single day must be a celebration of a just and comprehensive peace, based on respect for the rights, beliefs and cultures of others. This is the only genuine choice that we have in order to be able to provide a better future for generations to come.

Mr. Al-Shamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset and on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, for the valuable information contained in his report, which will certainly strengthen our debate on this item. I also would like to express our appreciation to UNESCO for its fine efforts aimed at safeguarding our cultural diversity and encouraging dialogue among civilizations.

In spite of the recommendations agreed on by the heads of State and Government during the Millennium Summit five years ago concerning the promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations aimed at eliminating differences, conflicts and obstacles among peoples and nations of the world, and reaffirmed in September 2005, ethnic and religious intolerance and extremism and violence continue to be among the major challenges that lead to hotbeds of tension, armed conflicts and violations of human rights in many countries of the world. This situation makes initiatives for dialogue among civilizations even more important, as are political and diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving greater understanding and rapprochement among peoples, and at spreading the best human practices, foremost among which are the principles of understanding, tolerance, solidarity and cooperation. All forms of extremism and hatred should be cast aside.

If we look at recent historical events, especially those of the last two decades, we find that, despite the end of the cold war and reduced conflict between East and West, we now have new conflicts that have emerged owing to ethnic, religious and cultural

competition among peoples, as well as between North and South and rich and poor. This situation poses a great threat to international peace, security and stability and places the responsibility for bridging the wide gap among civilizations on the shoulders of all States, religious leaders and other leaders in the social, scientific, and cultural arenas.

We affirm that violence and terror, ethnic cleansing practices and other horrors and war witnessed in many areas of the world in recent years clearly indicate that their perpetrators do not belong to one particular nationality, religion or race, but have varied origins and various political, religious and ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, we are deeply concerned about the continued campaigns of discrimination, hostility and distortion that many Western media agencies are engaged in against certain ethnic and religious groups. We consider these campaigns a main source of hatred and discrimination among peoples and civilizations. Accordingly, as a first step, we call upon States and their media to ensure objectivity and transparency in handling issues and crises pertaining to developing States, and to adopt serious measures to confront all hostile, provocative and discriminatory practices committed against peoples, especially the peoples of the Islamic and Arab States.

The economic and development benefits of globalization achieved during the last two decades and enjoyed by many countries have contributed to bringing developing countries under the influence of Western media and advanced technology, making most members of the younger generation in developing countries less connected to the specificities of the cultural diversity of their own societies. Therefore, since we believe in the importance of continued interaction and diversity between civilizations, we ask institutions in the developed States to cease their monopoly over modern technology, discontinue their unilateral policies, understand the concerns and issues of other peoples and nations, and refrain from interference in their internal affairs and from denying their national rights.

We also demand that all initiatives calling for promoting dialogue among civilizations include serious and effective measures aimed at resolving problems of colonialism and foreign occupation and reducing the gap between developed and developing countries, especially in the areas of poverty, development and clean and safe environment. In addition, measures should also include plans to achieve development through the unconditional liberalization of trade and by giving the developing countries access to the latest production technologies so that opportunities for development are available for their people. That would narrow the gap between these countries and developed ones.

This should be achieved within a framework based on the principles of justice, transparency, equality among peoples and respect for the dignity, beliefs and inalienable rights of human beings, and rejecting any double standards still practised to this day with regard to issues and interests of other States.

The United Arab Emirates, guided by the traditions and customs of its Arab society and the principles of Islamic heritage, such as diversity, has followed appropriate policies based on two parallel principles. The first includes the adoption of educational, cultural and social programs aimed at reinforcing its humanitarian and moral values among all social groups in order to ensure better participation in national development programmes and the enjoyment of prosperity, while protecting them from spreading social, psychological, health and cultural ills. The second principle aims at developing these values and concepts and employing them in accordance with the requirements of modern times, without altering their essence. It also aims at strengthening, among our citizens, the concepts of mutual respect for other cultures, traditions and beliefs. These principles were articulated in a speech given by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan two days ago in his meeting with Muslim religious leaders to celebrate the month of Ramadan. In his speech, he stressed the importance of showing Islam's tolerance and its noble values, which are based on compassion, brotherhood, tolerance and respect for other religions, and which call for virtuous deeds and the consolidation of the values of justice, love, peace and good for others.

The United Arab Emirates has also promulgated laws and decisions to ensure freedom of religious, cultural and social activities and traditions for foreign minorities living in the country. In addition, it encourages cultural events, such as seminars, workshops, exhibitions, which include as participants intellectuals, journalists, artists, musicians, folklore troupes and so forth from all over the world, in order to enrich our society's openness and knowledge of the

diversity of other cultures, ideas and concepts, while maintaining our own distinctive cultural environment.

The United Arab Emirates has entered a number of bilateral, regional and international agreements and memorandums of understanding relating to cooperation in the fields of cultural exchange, education and media. It has also participated in international conferences and forums on cultural and intellectual issues, which have contributed to the enhancement of its interaction and cooperation with other civilizations.

In conclusion, we hope that our deliberations will constitute a step forward in strengthening dialogue among civilizations as a new approach and mechanism for international relations, building bridges of understanding, cooperation and openness among countries and inspiring joint efforts to reinforce peace and security and the peaceful coexistence of peoples and future generations.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Today, the Assembly is considering two important subjects in this joint debate on agenda items 42 and 43.

The International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010, has entered its fifth year, and I wish to thank the Government of Bangladesh for bringing that initiative to the agenda of the General Assembly.

During this meeting, the Assembly is also reviewing the progress of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action adopted in 2001 (resolution 56/6), for which we owe our gratitude to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Pakistan has had a long association with those two initiatives and has traditionally been a sponsor of the two draft resolutions introduced by Bangladesh and Iran under those agenda items.

We are thankful to the Secretary-General for his reports on the two agenda items.

The Declaration on a Culture of Peace (resolution 53/243), adopted by the General Assembly on 13 September 1999, sets out a set of values, attitudes and behaviours. That historic document is based on the principles of multilateral cooperation in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, respect for life, the ending of violence and the promotion and the practice of non-violence through education, dialogue, cooperation and commitment to the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

In our globalized world, there is increased interaction among all cultures and civilizations. That has given rise to new forms of exchange and understanding among peoples across the regions and has created unprecedented opportunities for the transmission of ideas.

However, the great paradox of today's world is that, while it has brought people closer and created vast networks of connectivity and interdependence, it has also spawned divisions and frictions among and within societies. Many of those divisions and frictions are manifested in religious tones.

The proliferation of sources and channels of information, instead of promoting a better understanding among peoples, have reinforced stereotypes and deepened misperceptions. Despite the surfeit of instantly available information, the gulf of misunderstanding among faiths and civilizations seems to have grown wider. There is both a knowledge deficit and an understanding deficit.

Many would agree that the root causes of friction among cultures and civilizations are not primarily religious. The central message of all religions is almost identical. The root cause of friction is not a clash of civilization but often a clash of political and economic interests. Clearly, responses to conflicting political interests are often cast in religious terms, but that is only an expedient disguise used by those pursuing narrow political and national objectives.

The need to promote cooperation and understanding among religions and cultures is therefore a contemporary imperative. Ethnicity, religion, culture, language and race must not be allowed to become a source of division. We must reassert our common humanity and our common universal values. We must pursue dialogue among different faiths and build bridges of friendship, understanding and cooperation to ameliorate the sufferings of those who are the victims of intolerance, discrimination, oppression and injustice.

There is increasing recognition of the several initiatives put forth by certain Member States in recent years to bridge the emerging divide between religions, cultures and civilizations. The proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran for a dialogue among civilizations,

Pakistan's proposal for enlightened moderation, the initiative on interfaith cooperation for peace by the Philippines and the proposal for an alliance of civilizations recently launched by Spain and Turkey are mutually reinforcing and seek to promote universal human welfare, freedom and progress. All those initiatives can serve as instruments to eliminate misunderstandings among faiths and cultures and as an antidote to the notion of a clash of civilizations.

We therefore agree with the recommendation in the note by the Secretary-General on the midterm global review of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010 (A/60/279), that a global framework should be promoted to integrate the various objectives of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (resolution 53/243 A and B).

There is a need to develop coordination machinery at the national, regional and international levels to strengthen cooperation among all relevant actors: the United Nations system, Member States, civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations.

Any endeavour to promote interfaith harmony and cooperation at the international level needs to cover political, social, economic, religious and cultural and institutional aspects. The way forward is to foster mutual understanding and concentrate resources on human development, poverty alleviation, education and social justice.

At the political level, interfaith harmony requires the rectification of the political injustices to which so many people are often subjected on account of their faith or beliefs.

Pakistan has sought to promote religious tolerance, understanding and cooperation within the United Nations for several years. At its fifty-eighth and fifty-ninth sessions, the General Assembly adopted Pakistan's resolution on the promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation, which emphasizes, inter alia, the need to strengthen freedom, justice, tolerance, cooperation and respect for the diversity of cultures and religions, which are all important elements for building international peace and security.

This year, Pakistan will again introduce under this agenda item a draft resolution highlighting the principles that enhance human well-being and freedom by uniting our efforts to secure universal peace. It is our hope that the General Assembly will once again adopt by consensus Pakistan's draft resolution on promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation. That would demonstrate our collective resolve to promote peace, prosperity and hope for all and our categorical rejection of intolerance, hate and discrimination.

Mr. Menan (Togo) (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly's commitment to promoting a culture of peace is justified by the fact that the current state of the world remains marked by armed conflicts, the persistent threat of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and small arms and light weapons. Those scourges distance us from the goal of peace, which inspired the founders of the Organization.

Mr. Loizaga (Paraguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Secretary-General reminds us of this when he rightly stresses in his Report on the Work of the Organization that the violent internal conflicts that still persist the world over cause millions of civilian victims, result in spillover to neighbouring countries and heighten the threat to peace and international security. And yet, faithful to its commitment to preserve future generations from the scourge of war, the United Nations has consistently attempted to prevent conflicts, to settle them and to build peace. The many, costly peacekeeping operations under way in the world, particularly in Africa, seek to secure peace through the disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of former combatants and through the organization of elections in some countries. They illustrate the key role that the United Nations plays in this area.

At the regional level, and particularly in Africa, our countries are setting up structures that can promote and strengthen peace, as apparent in the establishment by the African Union of a Peace and Security Council, as well as the African Peer Review Mechanism, institutions that function and express the desire of Africa to take control of its own destiny.

The determination of the international community to strengthen and promote peace and security should, however, not make us lose sight of how important it is to further strengthen bonds among the principle organs

of the United Nations, the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council on the one hand, and between the United Nations and regional organizations on the other, in order to move forward in achieving peace for the peoples of the world.

In this connection, the decision of the High-level Plenary Meeting to create a Peacebuilding Commission is a considerable achievement, and the delegation of Togo hopes that the consultations begun by the General Assembly will lead to making the Commission operational.

The ongoing quest for a peace-loving world is truly appropriate during the Decade for the Culture of Peace proclaimed in 2001. Togo welcomes the many activities conducted under the aegis of UNESCO at the international and national levels, actions described thoroughly in the report of the Secretary-General (*A/60/279*). Among the many activities occurring under the auspices of the United Nations system, we cite in particular the UNESCO public awareness campaign — UNESCO being the coordinator of the programme for the Decade — which has increased awareness of the idea that the culture of peace goes hand in hand with the dialogue among civilizations. This is particularly the case following the horrendous act of terrorism of 11 September 2001 in the United States.

Likewise, within countries, UNESCO's communities should continue to strive to ensure that peoples heed the values of tolerance, respect for others, cultural diversity and peaceful coexistence. Thus, we are happy to see that this debate is taking place a few days after UNESCO's adoption of the Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions. Furthermore, we should like to emphasize that the information and recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report make it possible to move forward towards a culture of peace between now and the end of the decade in 2010.

As is well known, actions carried out or initiated by the United Nations system in cooperation with States, particularly in the spheres of education, the promotion of human rights and democracy, have a chance to succeed only if they have the support of the Governments of our countries. As far as Togo is concerned, we can never repeat often enough that the authorities of Togo have always considered the quest for peace, within as well as outside of the country, the very foundation of our country's policy.

Thus, a few months ago, after his election as leader of our country, His Excellency Faure Gnassingbé took the decision to create a Commission of Reflection on and Rehabilitation of Togo's History. Any observer knowledgeable of political life in Togo can recognize that this commission will make it possible to rehabilitate all those who have played a decisive role in the political history of Togo. For the Government of Togo, the establishment of such a commission is the key stage in enhancing the national reconciliation and unity of our country.

Apart from preventing war, the culture of peace should also be construed as a culture whose goal is to ensure the well-being of the peoples of our countries. Indeed, in our world, where more than half of the population still survives on less than a dollar a day, a world where poverty and misery strike large numbers of men, women and children and prevent them from meeting their very basic and fundamental needs, we can understand quite easily that for those wretched of the earth, peace means first and foremost, living without want.

In this connection, the delegation of Togo hopes that the need to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, which was reaffirmed strongly by the High-level Plenary of the General Assembly, will receive the support needed, which our countries are entitled to expect from their development partners. Thus, convinced that the success of the Decade of the Culture of Peace depends on the same factors, Togo has this year become a sponsor of the draft resolution just introduced by Bangladesh.

In conclusion, the delegation of Togo should like to recall that peace is a form of behaviour that must consistently reflect moral values such as justice, tolerance, mutual understanding and a heightened sense of the need to share. We believe that the true meaning of the Decade for Peace is to be found in the practice of these values.

Mr. Rybakov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): With the proclamation of 2001 as the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, the international community took an important step forward in the interests of peace, stability and security. That is why the Republic of Belarus supports and encourages the concept of dialogue among civilizations. The globalization of the

world and the new threats and challenges increasingly remind us of how multifaceted is the interdependence between peoples and countries in various areas of human activity, including the environment, health care, the economy, culture and security.

Today's world reminds the international community of the need to unite our efforts and develop global partnerships, primarily through a deeper appreciation of the value of diversity of civilizations and of diverse paths to progress. It is on the basis of that understanding that the delegation of Belarus joins the sponsors of draft resolution A/60/L.6, entitled "Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations".

We are pleased that the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations is attracting increasing interest from Member States, international organizations and civil society. The holding of an increasing number of dialogue-related events — such as cultural festivals, exchange programmes, joint projects and conferences in the areas of education, science and culture — promotes a better understanding among peoples and encourages a culture of peace.

The establishment of the Alliance of Civilizations may lend additional impetus to the popularization of an approach based on a dialogue among civilizations. We expect the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to play an active role and welcome its efforts for a dialogue among civilizations.

For each country it is crucial that the achievements of its national culture — in all its diversity of shape, character and style — become known beyond its borders. That helps mutual understanding and tolerance and promotes dialogue among civilizations. Mutual understanding among States is possible only when the representatives of one ethnic group know about and respect the culture, traditions and customs of others.

With each passing year, Belarus is steadily proving to be a forum for important international festivals, arts competitions, exhibitions and meetings for representatives of the artistic community. Belarus also attaches great importance to the commemoration of milestones and significant events in our history that portray mutual interaction and complementarity of cultures. This year, Belarus instituted a special prize on promoting peace and mutual understanding through art, which is awarded to individuals involved in culture and art, as well as to creative groups and organizations, who have made a significant contribution to strengthening international cultural cooperation and have highlighted the achievements and models of a global arts culture based on humane ideals and values.

Our delegation agrees with Secretary-General that it is essential to promote the idea of dialogue among civilizations directly at the local level, so that it can produce tangible results and be important for the entire international community.

The distinguishing feature of the cultural landscape in Belarus is the presence in our country of more than 140 ethnic cultures and peoples: Russians, Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, Ukrainians, Jews, Tatars and others. Those cultures have historical roots in Belarus, as well as their own destinies and distinguishing features. While retaining their national diversity, taken together, they are part of our overall national cultural heritage. The Government's cultural policy protects the natural coexistence and interaction among cultures and among ethnic communities with Belarusian culture. It guarantees the free development of national and ethnic groups among the country's population and seeks to allow them both free expression of their specific cultural orientation and integration into the our larger, common culture. The Government supports cultural, spiritual and linguistic ties between citizens from other national origins and the countries of their forebears.

In conclusion, the delegation of Belarus would like to proclaim its firm support for the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations as the basis for the establishment and strengthening of mutual understanding and trust among countries and peoples.

Mr. Assaf (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today the General Assembly resumes its consideration of the dialogue among civilizations so as to evaluate the implementation of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, adopted four years ago. Our discussion this year also coincides with the mid-term global review of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace, which is a natural outcome of the dialogue.

The United Nations is the best forum for a dialogue among civilizations and the establishment of new norms in international relations. UNESCO has carried out a wide range of seminars and conferences in order to spread and strengthen dialogue. There are many items and draft resolutions on the Assembly's agenda for the sixtieth session that call for dialogue,

interaction and tolerance, among others: the draft resolution on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (*A/60/L.6*), the draft resolution on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010 (*A/60/L.5*), a draft resolution on human rights and cultural diversity and the draft resolution on the promotion of interreligious dialogue and cooperation for peace (*A/60/L.4*).

If we look around us we will surely find that we are governed by dialogue and interaction. Civilizations and cultures are diverse and numerous, as are languages and races. Those differences are an indisputable reality, and they make dialogue indispensable. Dialogue among civilizations means an acknowledgement of differences vis-à-vis others and an acceptance of those differences.

Differences are at the heart of dialogue. One cannot really envision a dialogue between two similar entities. Dialogue means dealing with diversity and difference as a source of enrichment, not as a source of danger. Dialogue among civilizations aims to achieve interaction and complementarity. It does not necessarily mean trying to integrate or erase the other. Dialogue means affirming the existence of the other, who is by definition different. It does not mean trying to eliminate or alienate that other.

Dialogue means an acknowledgement that our ownership of the truth is relative. Truth cannot be the sole property of any one civilization or culture. It is the joint property of all civilizations.

Accordingly, we should always try to see the good in others so we can benefit from it. We should always examine our shortcomings so we can correct them. Dialogue means tolerance. It does not mean the powerful imposing their will on the weak; it means listening to others. That way, the weak and the vulnerable will feel that the powerful do listen to them, and the powerful will feel the obligation to explain and justify their position to others.

In his report on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (*A/60/259*), the Secretary-General notes that the Lebanese Ministry of Education informed the Secretariat of the actions taken by the Lebanese Government to encourage dialogue among civilizations. In Lebanon, such a dialogue is not merely a slogan or a principle. It is a reality we experience and live every day. Dialogue is evident in the diverse religious and cultural arenas. The will of Muslims and Christians to coexist is what makes Lebanon a model for coming together. That fact led to the observation by the late Pope John Paul II that Lebanon is more than a country; Lebanon is a message.

In the context of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, the Ninth Summit of la Francophonie, held in Lebanon from 18 to 20 October 2002, adopted the Beirut Declaration on the dialogue of cultures. The Declaration calls for thematic dialogues on issues such as our openness to ideas different from our own, the appreciation of differences and distinctions, and the search for common and shared values.

Our fulfilment of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations depends on our resolve, as peoples of the United Nations, to fulfil the commitment set out in the Preamble of the United Nations Charter: to practice tolerance and live in peace with one another as good neighbours. That way, the enemy of yesterday will become the friend of today, and the friend of today will be tomorrow's ally.

Mr. Mutahar (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today, years after the adoption of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, we underline the importance of respect for human rights and basic freedoms for all, regardless of race, gender, language, religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, financial situation, place of birth or any other condition. Now, we must redouble our efforts to improve international human rights conditions.

In recent years we have stressed the importance of establishing international standards and mechanisms for ethical and legal human rights frameworks in order to overcome historical and cultural differences so that human rights and respect for human dignity are held as superior values governing all nations.

Although efforts have been made, human rights violations remain a grave concern for all because of their horrendous and serious nature. We continue to hear of cases of racial discrimination and violence against vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly and the handicapped, as well as acts of murder, detentions and extrajudicial killings. While the international community has given the issue significant attention, it is not enough. We need cooperation at all levels to raise public awareness and spread the culture of human rights among all members of society. In that

context, in the 2005 World Summit outcome document (*resolution 60/1*), heads of State and Government emphasized the need to promote human rights education at all levels and encouraged States to develop awareness initiatives in that respect.

Since its unification on 22 May 1990, Yemen has attached great importance to the issues of human rights and private and public freedoms. That concern is embodied in laws that have been enacted, beginning with the constitution, and is reflected in Yemen's signing and ratification of international and regional human rights agreements and conventions.

As a sign of the importance that the Republic of Yemen attaches to human rights, we have created a Ministry for Human Rights, part of the executive branch of Government. The Ministry is currently headed by a woman. Its main goals include the proposal of plans, policies, programmes and measures that guarantee the promotion of human rights; plans to educate citizens on their legal rights under the constitution and State laws; to spread a human rights culture throughout society by various means of public education; to cooperate with civil society human rights organizations, involving them in the discussion of national reports on human rights conventions; and to organize activities and educational awareness efforts on human rights issues.

Yemen was among the first States to ratify the human rights treaties and agreements and actively seeks to incorporate the provisions of those treaties into Yemeni laws, making them no mere words on paper but concretely implemented law. As part of those efforts, the Republic of Yemen formulates national plans incorporating the awareness and the promotion of a culture of peace and human rights. Those plans include Yemen's Strategic Vision through 2025, the national strategy for youth integration, the national strategy for literacy and adult education, the gender strategy in agriculture and food security and the national population plan for 2001-2020.

Yemeni society has been characterized by moral and religious tolerance since ancient times. Those values have their origin in the Islamic faith, which prohibits discrimination and separation and encourages brotherhood and peace. In Yemen, we have a Jewish minority that enjoys the rights and duties of Yemeni citizenship and full freedom to practice their religious rights and rituals, as established by the constitution. The Government of Yemen has also given attention to media, cultural and religious discourse, including journalism and the media, and encourages scholars, preachers, university professors and religious seminars and educators to properly explain the doctrines and the benevolent views of Islam. In that context, the Ministry of Education has unified the curriculum in primary and secondary education throughout the country. Religious schools have also become part of the public education system in order to unify ideas among all segments of Yemeni society and to avoid fanaticism and extremism.

We should also point out that the political leadership in Yemen has paid special attention to the culture of peace and has sought to provide living examples that show tolerance and brotherhood to Yemeni youth. These include amnesty for the 16 individuals who began the war of separation in 1994 and all of those who took part in that war, as well as invitations for them to return to the country and to take part in its reconstruction. Also included is the release of all detainees who were imprisoned in the aftermath of the riots that took place in Yemen in 2004, and allowing members of the family that ruled prior to the Yemeni revolution to return and to be compensated for the loss of their property.

In its fight against extremism, Yemen depends on dialogue with the extremists in order to spread the culture of peace and to enlighten them in Islamic values that call for tolerance and brotherhood. In that context, we held an international seminar in the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, from 18 to 22 September, organized by Bridges among Cultures.

Concerning foreign relations, Yemen believes in the principle of peaceful coexistence among nations, and has proved beyond a doubt that its policy is in line with that principle. This can be seen in its resolution through peaceful means of its border conflicts with its neighbours.

The principles of human rights are mandatory. We must implement them and make certain that our commitment to the objectives of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will not affect the cultural specificities of each State.

In conclusion, we emphasize that international resolutions must maintain neutrality and avoid double standards and selectivity when dealing with human rights issues.

Ms. Ng Yen Yen (Malaysia): First and foremost, my delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his reports on the promotion of interreligious dialogue (*A/60/201*) and the implementation of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (*A/60/259*), and the note of the Secretary-General on the midterm global review of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010 (*A/60/279*).

The desire for peace has always run parallel to the innate nature of human beings to battle against one another. Our modern history has witnessed two horrible world wars that brought untold sorrow and suffering to humankind. In order to save succeeding generations from the scourge of such wars, the United Nations was founded with the solemn determination to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another.

It is disheartening to note that recent tragic events — from the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks and the Madrid and London bombings, to the latest incident in Bali — have further exacerbated the widening gap among civilizations and generated a negative perspective of Islam, particularly among non-Muslims in the West and elsewhere. There is a dire need to correct the misconception that acts of terrorism are sanctioned by any particular religion or culture. Terrorism must be attributed to the perpetrators and not the religion they profess. It is totally unjustifiable to associate terrorism with any particular race or religion. The root causes of any act of terrorism must be carefully examined in order to effectively address and combat terrorism.

The international community must recognize the importance of engaging communities in the promotion of religious and cultural understanding and of eliminating all forms of religious intolerance. However, it is regrettable that these issues are being approached within the narrow perspective of a subset of the larger debate on counter-terrorism. This represents a superficial manner of dealing with the real issues.

Realizing that ominous trend, Malaysia supports initiatives such as the culture of peace, dialogue among civilizations, and interfaith dialogues, which are important international efforts to promote mutual understanding and cooperation through intercultural, inter-civilizational and interreligious programmes. We believe that positive interaction among peoples of diverse cultures and values would contribute to the attainment of global peace and stability, which are essential for the achievement of sustainable economic and social development.

In Malaysia, we live in a national setting which is multireligious, multiethnic and multicultural. Islam, the official religion, and other religions and faiths, coexist in a tolerant environment. The Government has embarked on a programme to communicate a proper appreciation of Islam as a force for good and progress that emphasizes development consistent with the tenets of Islam, and focuses on enhancing the quality of life. We call that approach "Islam Hadari" or "civilizational Islam", which has been promoted by the Prime Minister of Malaysia since 2004. Through that approach, Malaysia has successfully managed its multiracial and multireligious society in a fair manner.

Civil society in Malaysia has also embarked on various initiatives to promote a culture of peace and interreligious dialogue, of which I would mention only a few. In April 2002 and March 2003, the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia initiated an interfaith dialogue in Kuala Lumpur, attended by representatives of major religious groups in Malaysia. Another effort by Malaysian civil society has been the establishment of the People's Alliance for Peace Malaysia, or Peace Malaysia, which is active in peace and humanitarian aid activities. The work of Peace Malaysia has become global in reach and includes aid for tsunami victims in Indonesia and Sri Lanka and earthquake victims in Pakistan, as well as support for the rights of the Palestinian people.

At the international level, Malaysia hosted the inaugural meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference's Commission of Eminent Persons, from 27 to 29 January 2005 in Putrajaya — the federal administrative capital. The meeting outlined proposals for cross-cultural and interreligious dialogue, including through regional and multilateral organizations. Malaysia will also organize the third Asia Europe Meeting ministerial conference on cultures and civilizations in Kuala Lumpur in 2007.

My delegation is describing Malaysia's experience in order to emphasize the point that there is a national as well as an international dimension to the issue of the peaceful and cooperative coexistence of religions, cultures and civilizations. Malaysia believes

that if Governments succeed in establishing a culture of tolerance and moderation among people at the national level, it will be easy for States to cooperate in promoting tolerance and moderation among nationalities and cultures at the international level and thus achieve global peace.

Mr. Lwin (Myanmar): At the outset, I thank the Secretary-General for his report on the promotion of interreligious dialogue (*A/60/201*) and commend the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for its report on the midterm global review of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010 (*A/60/279*).

At its fifty-second session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 52/15, which proclaimed 2000 the International Year for the Culture of Peace. The following year, the General Assembly, in resolution 53/25, added momentum to the promotion of the culture of peace by including the issue of children, and proclaimed the decade 2001-2010 the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. The special importance that the international community attaches to the culture of peace was underscored in the historic Millennium Declaration. This year is the midpoint of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. It is, indeed, an opportune time to review the progress that we have made in the past five years.

The world is facing serious, new challenges today. Conflicts in various parts of the world, terrorism and transnational crime, which respect no borders, have serious negative consequences on development, peace and security. To meet the new challenges, we must work together cooperatively. We must acknowledge the importance of respect and understanding for religious and cultural diversity. We must promote the culture of peace. In fact, the promotion of a culture of peace is very important as we strive to achieve universal peace.

The United Nations has played a leading role in maintaining and promoting a culture of peace, through the adoption of international instruments, declarations and plans of action.

Myanmar attaches special importance to promoting a culture of peace, which we implement at the national level and in our relations with our neighbours. Myanmar shares common borders with five countries, including the two most populous nations in the world, China and India. It is our adherence to mutual respect and the understanding of different cultures and traditions that enables us to have peaceful and friendly relations with all our neighbours. We also have a strong resolve to maintain and further strengthen our amicable relationships not only with our immediate neighbours but also with all the countries of the world.

Myanmar is home to more than 100 national races. The Government attaches great importance to national unity and the maintenance of peace and stability. Having had to face the scourge of insurgency for more than 50 years, Myanmar greatly values peace and stability. Understanding and mutual respect have played an important role in the Government's successful efforts to bring 17 armed insurgent groups into the legal fold. With peace and stability now prevailing in almost all parts of the country, the Government is able to help bring development to the border areas. In order to strengthen ties and promote the economic and social development of national races inhabiting the border areas, the Government has implemented a border area development programme. It has spent 65 billion kyats and more than $550 million in infrastructure development, including communication networks and education and health facilities, thus enhancing the quality of life of the inhabitants. We strongly believe that meaningful poverty alleviation contributes to the realization of the culture of peace.

In promoting the culture of peace, respect for and understanding of different religions and cultures is very important. While Theravada Buddhism is the religion of the majority of people in Myanmar, other religions such as Christianity, Islam and Hinduism coexist and flourish. It is common in Myanmar to find people of one faith celebrating joyously and harmoniously in the festivals of other religions. Religious feast days of all religions are calendar holidays, and senior leaders of the country participate in the observance of those religious ceremonies. Thus, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, the former Independent Expert on the Human Rights Situation in Myanmar, cited the country as a model society for religious tolerance.

It is fitting that the issue of children has been linked to the issue of a culture of peace. Children are our future. We believe that children who grow up in a

peaceful environment can build a brighter future as they become the leaders of tomorrow. That is why, in creating a world fit for children, in Myanmar we have strived for and attained peace and stability. We have also set out a national plan of action for the promotion, protection and development of children. We also attach importance to promoting human rights. We believe in educating our children at an early stage and have included human rights education in school curricula nationwide.

The decade's priority theme for 2005 is equality between women and men, in the context of the conclusion of the Beijing Plus 10 process. In Myanmar, we have made great strides in fostering gender equality.

The women of Myanmar enjoy equal rights with men with regard to inheritance and divorce. A unique feature of Myanmar culture is that women retain their maiden names even after marriage. Myanmar women have specific claims of ownership to a husband's property. Moreover, Myanmar women, regardless of race or religion, enjoy equal rights under national laws.

To fulfil the commitments undertaken at Beijing, the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs was established in July 1996. To give further impetus to the promotion of the role of women, the protection of women's rights and the economic empowerment of women, the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation was formed in December 2003 as an umbrella organization for the many non-governmental organizations working for the overall development of women.

My delegation fully shares the view that all religions, cultures and civilizations contribute to the enrichment of humankind. We firmly believe that the promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue among diverse religions through understanding, respect and tolerance would go a long way in bringing peace and harmony worldwide. It is a worthy endeavour that will benefit present and future generations. It is an endeavour in which we are firmly resolved to take active part.

Mr. Gruetter (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland thanks the Secretary-General for his informative report on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (*A/60/259*), and welcomes the draft resolution proposed by the Islamic Republic of Iran that seeks to further intensify the dialogue among civilizations. Switzerland also supports the Secretary-General's initiative on an Alliance of Civilizations, which was launched on the initiative of the Spanish and Turkish Governments.

Mutual understanding among cultures is indispensable for the peaceful coexistence of different civilizations. Switzerland, as a country made up of different cultures and religions, has had to learn how to coexist peacefully in its small territory. It has had to overcome differences of religious denomination, language and economic interests in order to create national unity while respecting diversity. Its history has been marked by violent confrontations between members of different religious denominations. Those confrontations ended a century and a half ago, thanks largely to a common determination to concentrate on ideas that united the different communities in practice, rather than focusing on those that set them apart in theory. The prerequisite for that success was respect for difference, and the conviction that every potential conflict can be resolved by dialogue. Democratic consultation, strong measures to protect minorities and constant efforts to achieve compromise were indispensable tools in the construction of our country.

My reason for reflecting on my country's experience is to try to draw a number of general conclusions. First, diversity can be a benefit only if the appreciation of difference is not used to overlook political, economic and cultural biases and injustices.

Secondly, mutual respect and tolerance are indispensable for the peaceful coexistence of different groups in society.

Thirdly, mutual respect on the basis of shared human values only develops within a democratic political and legal framework that respects minorities and is based on the rule of law. The active participation of minorities in political debate and decision-making is vital to avoid a situation in which democracy degenerates into a tyranny of the majority.

Fourthly, even if, on the one hand, the invocation of shared values is often not enough in and of itself to resolve conflicts and overcome misunderstandings, one must, on the other hand, recognize that the political and legal framework of a democracy remains a dead letter, and may even appear to be unjust, if it is not animated by a spirit of mutual respect and of shared basic values.

Given the sometimes increasing difficulties of understanding between the different cultures of our world, the initiative for an Alliance of Civilizations has come at the right moment. We are convinced that it will be able to build on the rich experience acquired in the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, with a view to analysing, in a sophisticated manner, the causes of and the difficulties engendered by misunderstandings, as well as proposing joint measures to alleviate them.

In that spirit, Switzerland has already launched several projects at the international level aimed at mutual learning and specific cooperation in areas of common interest between factions separated by important ideological or religious differences. Recently, Switzerland has been particularly interested in understanding the religious dimensions of misunderstandings and conflicts, and has drawn two conclusions: first, progress can only be reached after concrete steps are taken to build confidence; and, secondly, a dialogue about values alone does not strengthen confidence.

The Secretary-General has established a High-level Group within the framework of the Alliance of Civilizations. In the terms of reference for that Group, he calls for the identification of collective actions that will establish a paradigm of mutual respect between civilizations and cultures. Switzerland is willing, in that respect, to share its experiences with the High-level Group and with the secretariat of the Alliance of Civilizations.

Mr. Erçin (Turkey): Turkey aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union on agenda item 43, entitled "Culture of peace". I wish, therefore, to expound our views on the other item that we are discussing today, namely, the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations.

The nature and scope of the challenges and threats to the peace, security, welfare and progress of the world today have certainly made the need for a genuine dialogue among different cultures and civilizations more essential than ever. The events of the recent past have not only reinforced that notion, but have also led to its being placed high on the international agenda.

At this critical juncture, Turkey believes that a meaningful and operational dialogue within the international community is, indeed, imperative. We need to actively engage in resolving the issues facing the world today by demonstrating respect for and understanding of cultures and civilizations other than our own. Tolerance, appreciation for different cultures and religious beliefs, harmony and plurality should find their rightful place in the set of principles that shape our respective societies.

Our globalizing world increasingly compels our societies to become more interdependent. We are of the view that mutual understanding and dialogue across cultures and civilizations should be one of the fundamental elements in inter-societal exchanges if we are to realize the ultimate goal of common peace and progress. In that connection, we very much appreciate the encouragement expressed by other delegations today aimed at furthering cross-cultural and cross-civilizational undertakings towards that goal. We were also pleased to observe that this significant issue was duly addressed in the United Nations summit outcome document. Turkey's full support for the matter is evidenced by our sponsorship of the draft resolution on this topic (*A/60/L.6*).

For its part, Turkey consistently tries to build a culture of reconciliation and compromise in its own region and beyond. The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)-European Union (EU) Joint Forum, which Turkey initiated in 2002, is a testament to our efforts to promote tolerance, mutual respect, understanding, dialogue and cooperation among different cultures and religions.

Given its historical relations and cultural ties to a wide geographical area, Turkey benefits from the rich perspective it has cultivated through exchanges that facilitate tolerance, harmony and understanding. It is that intrinsic value, which Turkey exemplifies, that made it a natural partner to Spain in promoting the Alliance of Civilizations. Originally proposed by Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero in his address to the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan was later invited to co-sponsor the initiative early this year. Since then, Turkey and Spain have been jointly engaged in furthering the initiative, which has also been endorsed by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan.

The Alliance of Civilizations aims to address emerging threats emanating from hostile perceptions that foment violence across cultures and civilizations

and to bring about a committed effort globally, at the institutional and civil society levels, to bridge divides and overcome prejudice, misconceptions, misperceptions and polarization within the world community. As we have all observed, this environment has been exploited and exacerbated by extremists in all societies. The initiative could therefore be regarded as a coalition against that trend, as a movement to advance mutual respect for religious beliefs and traditions and as a reaffirmation of humankind's increasing interdependence in all areas.

The Alliance of Civilizations is a genuine effort to prove that the peoples of the world are not divided along cultural and religious lines, but bound by universal values that are derived from the foundation of humankind's collective wisdom, conscience and drive for progress. We encourage all Member States to respond to that call.

Ms. Enkhtsetseg (Mongolia): The words of Samuel Huntington in 1993 that the clash of civilizations will dominate global politics and that the fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future were an ominous forecast of the future. Indeed, 60 years after the end of the Second World War, anti-semitism remains a problem. Racism and xenophobia are issues with which we are still grappling. We are also witnessing the emergence of such new concepts as Islamophobia.

The question may arise: was Mr. Huntington perhaps right? The answer to that question must be a resounding "no". The Organization was established to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, and we the Member States have a responsibility to ensure that that solemn undertaking is upheld. The United Nations has been instrumental in preventing the outbreak of global war during the past years. We are convinced that it is fully equipped to continue doing so in the future.

The dialogue among civilizations initiated by President Khatami is a key initiative aimed at helping us avoid the dark prospect of an all-out clash among civilizations. Since its introduction, that concept has engendered progressively greater interest from Member States, including my own country. That noble initiative gained further strength and weight with the adoption, in 2001, of resolution 56/6, on the global dialogue among civilizations. That resolution included a comprehensive Programme of Action that has been vigorously enacted through a host of multifaceted activities undertaken by Member States and other stakeholders, and was reaffirmed by our leaders in the outcome document of the September summit.

We live in a world that is both unique and diverse. We also live in a world that is increasingly interdependent and rapidly changing. Different peoples, religions, cultures and civilizations are today engaged in an unprecedented level of interaction and in an interchange of values, with ideas and events that originate in one corner of the world and yet instantly affect its other parts. That openness and the perceived defencelessness in the face of change create a natural reaction of rejection, distrust and even fear in people, and lead to attempts to define and protect their identity through exclusion and separation. Yet, the course of human history teaches us that interaction and the preservation of one's identity are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary processes that allow us to learn the best and leave behind the obsolete.

Human civilization reached its current heights only through a long process of interaction and cooperation among nations and peoples with diverse cultures and traditions. Diversity is therefore the prerequisite for the continued progressive development of the human race. It is only by understanding, recognizing, respecting and encouraging that diversity that a genuine dialogue among civilizations can best be attained. Diversity is not a threat; it is indeed our strength. The breakthrough in information technology gives us a unique opportunity to promote it on a global scale.

The draft resolution under this agenda item that we are about to adopt today emphasizes that the real object of the dialogue among civilizations are the hearts and minds of the next generation. Indeed, unlearning intolerance cannot be achieved overnight. It will require years of careful and persistent efforts by all stakeholders, including Governments, international organizations, civil society, media and academia.

Civilizations do not have clear-cut boundaries and borders, they flow smoothly into one another. They are entities that comprise elements of history, geography, ethnicity, religion, customs and politics, and are therefore greatly diversified within themselves. An example of that is the great nomadic civilization of the Eurasian steppe, of which my country is a part.

That civilization not only encompasses Buddhist countries like Mongolia, but also includes predominantly Muslim and Christian societies. A distinct form of world civilization, it has largely existed in peaceful symbiosis with sedentary societies across Asia and Europe, and has played an important role in the development of extensive trade networks and the creation of large administrative, cultural, religious and commercial centres.

Nomadic societies and peoples have played a crucial role in the interaction between different civilizations, as for thousands of years they have served as a bridge between world civilizations. Throughout the history of the world, nomadic civilizations have absorbed the influence of others, both in the West and the East, and in turn have had a profound impact on them. However, the role and contribution of nomadic civilizations has, by and large, received little attention to date.

The rapid advance of globalization poses challenges, along with many opportunities, to the preservation and development of the centuries-old traditions and cultures of nomadic peoples. Among other things, pastoral nomadism permits societies to exploit the variable and patchy resources of the steppe. Its mobility allows for the seasonal exploitation of resources that are not sufficient to sustain human and herbivore populations throughout the year. The ability of nomads to adapt to the whims of nature and to live in harmony with it has produced different techniques and ways of protecting and using land in a sustained manner. That ability is even more useful in view of such environmental threats as deforestation, desertification and soil erosion, which affect the livelihoods of people and developmental prospects in many countries, including nomadic societies.

Guided by the goal of achieving an objective understanding of all civilizations and by the conviction that civilizational achievements constitute a collective heritage of humankind, Mongolia is making every effort to further expand studies on various aspects of nomadic civilization, its influence and its interaction with others. My Government commends the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for its valuable contribution to the implementation of the Global Agenda, and particularly its contribution to the study of nomadic civilization through the work of the International Institute for the Study of Nomadic Civilizations, which is located in the capital of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar. Among other things, the Institute has organized international conferences on the theme "Nomadism in Mongolia and its relationship with sedentary civilizations: its relevance and prospects", as well as on "Dialogue among cultures and civilizations: present and perspective of nomadism in a globalizing era".

Mongolia will celebrate the eight hundredth anniversary of its Statehood next year. We believe that that anniversary provides a welcome opportunity to trigger renewed interest in nomadic civilization and to facilitate the efforts of Member States to preserve and develop nomadic culture and traditions in modern society. We also plan to organize a host of activities, both within the country and internationally, to celebrate the rich heritage, traditions and culture of nomadic civilization. In so doing we will be making our own contribution to promoting and facilitating the dialogue among civilizations.

With that in mind, at a later date my delegation will introduce a draft resolution entitled "Eight hundred years of Mongolian Statehood", whose aim will be to promote understanding and recognition of nomadic civilization within the framework of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. My delegation believes that this initiative will command broad support on the part of the General Assembly.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): As we meet at the mid-point of the 2001-2010 International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, we are heartened by the genesis of a global movement of peaceseekers and peacebuilders. We applaud the multitude of grass-roots initiatives blossoming at mid-decade. We also express our profound appreciation and gratitude for the exemplary actions of world leaders, particularly the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey, as well as those of a considerable number of eminent persons.

At the midterm of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, we reaffirm the inextricable nexus among peace, development and security. We call for increased and accelerated efforts in the areas of peacebuilding, peacekeeping, conflict prevention, disarmament, sustainable development, the promotion of human dignity and human rights, democracy, the rule of law and good governance. We commend the many young people from different parts of the world who have

collectively contributed to the mid-decade World Civil Society report on a culture of peace. We also commend and express our gratitude to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of UNESCO for launching significant activities and initiatives that have contributed substantively to building bridges of unity and common ground among civilizations, religions and societies. The State of Qatar has supported their commendable efforts throughout the years.

Peace is more than the absence of war: peace is a process and a way of solving problems. It does not rest in charters, declarations or covenants alone, but lies in the hearts and minds of all people. In this era of complex international tensions, converging currents of globalization and calls for the clash of civilizations, peace is our most precious common possession. The arduous work to establish peace is an undertaking for every nation and society. To that end, none can be uncommitted; otherwise posterity will rightly point its finger at us all.

From the outset, the State of Qatar has been a fervent supporter of United Nations efforts to foster a culture of peace and to promote a dialogue among civilizations. The State of Qatar has continuously advocated the principle of dialogue aimed at deepening the scope of understanding and establishing the foundations for mutual respect, friendship and cooperation between countries and societies. That incentive has become more urgent after the despicable tragedy of 11 September 2001.

The Emir of the State of Qatar, His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, and Her Highness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al-Missned, consort of His Highness the Emir, are among the eminent persons who believe in the common humanity of all and who dream of a world where we can all live in dignity and security. Their advocacy, compassion, vision and conviction have led to multiple successful initiatives to deepen the scope of understanding between countries and societies, particularly between the Muslim and Western worlds. The State of Qatar is adamantly against religious bigotry and extremism and categorically rejects any identification or association of terrorism with Islam or any other religion.

At the global level, the State of Qatar has been a leading advocate of the need to promote dialogue among civilizations. Since 2000, it has supported at the highest political level all United Nations resolutions calling for a culture of peace. We have also supported the implementation of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action, as well as other peace-related resolutions from various United Nations conferences.

In addition, in other regional and international forums — such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council — we have been keen to promote mutual tolerance and understanding between and among nations.

At the national level, the State of Qatar has taken concrete steps to implement the Global Agenda and the Programme of Action. Appropriate cultural, educational and social programmes have been developed to promote the concepts of peace and dialogue. In that regard, considerable attention has been given to the activities of local civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations. Relevant information intended to foster mutual understanding and recognition among and within nations has been disseminated widely in national academic circles. Moreover, school curricula and textbooks have incorporated the culture of tolerance and respect for culture diversity, while preserving the values and ethos of Qatari society.

The State of Qatar devotes considerable energy to promoting a culture of peace through hosting dialogues, thereby facilitating interaction and exchanges of values, attitudes and modes of behaviour conducive to enhancing world peace. Such dialogues have focused on the fundamentals of human existence and have addressed crucial issues, thereby underscoring the common goals, principles and interests of the community of nations.

The culture of peace is essentially the cultivation of the creative potential of men and women to develop skills, mindsets, values and attitudes for living together in harmony. The effort to improve the human condition is not a task for the few; it is a task for all nations and societies. We owe it to our children to consecrate every iota of energy and effort we possess to bequeath a world devoid of injustice, prejudice, hatred, extremism, subjugation, mistrust and discrimination of all kinds. We must not fail our children, who in most instances are the primary victims of violence. Let us prepare our children for peace by teaching them to be peacebuilders and to abhor violence and the use of physical force to achieve an aim.

In the next half decade, it is incumbent upon Governments, the United Nations system and civil society, including religious institutions, to attain inter-civilizational understanding on the basis of respect for all religions and for cultural diversity, in order to bridge the wide divide that still prevails amidst the storms of daily conflict and crisis. We must seize the vision of a culture of peace to speed progress toward a better world.

The international community has a moral responsibility to improve life on Earth and to promote peace and tranquillity for its inhabitants. Our work to buttress a culture of peace, coupled with wisdom and adherence to principles, will ultimately determine our destiny. We must strengthen the international community's cultural resources and compassion to contribute substantially and work together towards a culture of peace. The nations of the world must continue to promote dialogue in all areas pertaining to the critical issues of peace, development and security, while underscoring the commonality of goals, principles and interests shared by all Member States. Above all, we should embrace cultural diversity, rather than fear or repress it, in order to engender international cooperation in resolving critical issues.

Organization of work

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to make an announcement concerning agenda item 73, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance". The President has asked His Excellency Mr. Jean-Marc Hoscheit, Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the United Nations, to be the coordinator of the informal consultations on draft resolutions under agenda item 73 and its sub-items (a), (c), (d) and (e), and he has graciously accepted. Luxembourg has done this very successfully in the past. As members will recall, sub-item (b) of agenda item 73 has been allocated to the Second Committee.

The President requests those delegations intending to submit draft resolutions under agenda item 73 to do so as early as possible, in order to allow time, if need be, for negotiations with a view to reaching consensus on those draft resolutions.

Before adjourning the meeting, I would like to thank the interpreters for their understanding, as we have exceeded our allotted time by a few minutes.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

United Nations A/60/PV.36

General Assembly
Sixtieth session

Official Records

36th plenary meeting
Thursday, 20 October 2005, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Loizaga (Paraguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 43 and 42 (*continued*)

Culture of peace

Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/201)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/60/279)

Draft resolutions (A/60/L.4 and A/60/L.5)

Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/259)

Draft resolution (A/60/L.6)

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The outcome document (resolution 60/1) adopted recently at the 2005 world summit reaffirms the General Assembly's Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action and the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace; welcomes the Alliance for Civilizations initiative announced by the Secretary-General in July this year; and calls on countries to take action to promote a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations at the local, national, regional and international levels. The Chinese delegation believes that the outcome document has provided the Organization and Member States with a good opportunity to accelerate the implementation of those commitments and initiatives.

There are nearly 200 countries in the world, which has more than 6 billion people. Despite the differences in their historical backgrounds, social systems, developmental levels, cultural traditions and religious beliefs, they have all contributed to the civilization of humanity. The global diversity and differences of civilizations and cultures should not be sources for conflict in the world. They should, instead, provide the motivation, impetus and springboard for international exchanges and cooperation.

The expansion of economic globalization has further complicated economic and social problems. Countries must therefore act in a spirit of openness and equality, acknowledge the diversity in the world, strengthen dialogue and exchanges among civilizations, resolve international and regional disputes through peaceful means and jointly build a world of harmony among all civilizations.

Since the events of 11 September 2001, counter-terrorism has become the international community's main focus of attention, and many efforts have been undertaken in that regard. In our counter-terrorist endeavour, we should give up the practice of associating terrorism with any particular civilization or religion. Only thus can we truly mobilize the forces of all countries to fight against terrorism and safeguard world peace.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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We are pleased to note that, since 2001, the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations has become an important initiative for deepening mutual understanding among nations. The United Nations, the relevant international organizations and Member States have carried out study trips, cultural and educational exchanges and joint scientific research. That has effectively increased the understanding of other cultures and religious beliefs among peoples in various countries and has promoted a more extensive culture of peace.

The reports submitted by the Secretary-General under agenda items 42 and 43 affirm the active engagement of Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academic institutions in the United Nations dialogue among civilizations and in the culture of peace. They describe valuable contributions made by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and put forward new recommendations for future work. We would like to express our appreciation for those efforts.

China has a 5,000-year-old history; the Chinese culture is a crystallization of long-term exchanges and blending among all Chinese ethnic cultures and between Chinese and foreign cultures. Diversity, tolerance and harmony are important features of Chinese culture.

In recent years, the Chinese Government has actively responded to United Nations initiatives. It has hosted quite a few international meetings on dialogue among civilizations and conducted wide-ranging cultural exchanges with many countries. China has also submitted its report to the United Nations on implementing the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and has actively participated in the drafting of the UNESCO convention on cultural diversity. These efforts have increased understanding between China and other countries and have played a vigorous role in promoting economic and social development. In future, the Chinese Government will continue to strengthen its cultural exchanges and dialogues on civilization with other countries and will make joint efforts for human progress and world peace and development.

Mr. Savua (Fiji): This year marks the midpoint of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace. It is time to take stock of how much has been achieved and balance it against the targets that were set with so much hope over five years ago.

It is true that, when reviewed, a number of aims may not have been realized. It is also true that, in the thinking of some, the United Nations has reduced its support of certain aspects of the spirit of the culture of peace. It must be borne in mind, however, that since the adoption in 1997 of resolution 52/15 proclaiming 2000 the International Year for the Culture of Peace and resolution 53/25 in 1998 proclaiming 2001-2010 the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, the United Nations has had to deal with a number of other important issues and major incidents.

We have witnessed the destruction of the Twin Towers, the war in Iraq, fighting in Afghanistan, famine in Somalia and ethnic problems in Sudan, among so many others. So, while United Nations efforts may be regarded as insufficient, they must be weighed against the Organization's ability to deal adequately with all the issues on its agenda.

While we agree with the general thrust of the points raised in the civil society report at the midpoint of the Decade for a Culture for Peace, we must say that one cannot hope to get one's wishes granted completely. Furthermore, there are other branches of the United Nations that are actively pursuing the realization of particular issues but are not quite ready to present reports.

In this regard, we would like to thank the Director General of UNESCO for his report on the implementation of resolution 58/11, as transmitted by the Secretary-General in document A/60/279 on 19 August 2005. UNESCO launched Manifesto 2000 at the beginning of the Decade to create public awareness. The Manifesto has been signed by 75,845,317 people so far. This figure represents more than one per cent of the world's population. The interactive website set up by UNESCO has to date received hits from 1,181 participants to disseminate information. Fiji — and, I am certain, our region — welcomes this UNESCO initiative, not only to keep us informed but also to reduce to manageable proportions our often referred-to tyranny of distance.

The United Nations defines the culture of peace as

> "respect for human rights, democracy and tolerance, the promotion of development,

education for peace, the free flow of information and the wider participation of women as an integral approach to preventing violence and conflicts, and efforts aimed at the creation of conditions for peace and its consolidation". (*resolution 53/25*)

The culture of peace provides us a positive alternative to the culture of war that has dominated human history up to now. It is a holistic approach that can facilitate the integration and synergy of all of the great social movements of our time.

We have repeated the definition here, so that it won't be confused with other cultural initiatives that might have been launched or other peace projects. The culture of peace is all-embracing, and it behooves us all to find ways in which we can help. Too often, we cite size and fiscal difficulties as excuses not to participate, even though others not so well off have made commendable efforts towards this worthwhile effort on the part of our young people. A prayer costs nothing; yet, how many prayer breakfasts have we attended where one sentence might mention our young people and their attempts to inculcate a culture of peace in our daily lives? If this sounds simple, then it is our contention that it was designed to be simple. None of the youth involved have drafted a statement for the General Assembly or its Main Committees. Their minds are clear and their consciences as yet unfettered by the worries of the world, but they want to help.

UNESCO's education objective activities have been focused on education for peace, human rights and linguistic diversity. The UNESCO education sector includes the development of national plans and programmes on human rights education through national and subregional projects. The main objective of these activities has been to help Member States modify legislation and practices in their educational policies to ensure that values such as human rights, peace, democratic participation, tolerance, non-violence and intercultural understanding are included in curricula, and to ensure that the corresponding educational processes are consistent with the teaching of such values, taking into account the socio-cultural background of each country.

Fiji welcomes the draft convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expression. We believe that this draft convention fits hand in glove with the culture of peace, and we hope that it will be adopted unanimously. This is one of the reasons we presented a candidate for the UNESCO Executive Board, who was elected last week.

Other organs of the United Nations are also involved in the pursuit of peace, UNICEF being one of them. They have to be commended for their commitment and sincere attempts to make a difference. The International Labour Organization's contribution to a culture of peace and non-violence has been its intervention in the field of prevention and rehabilitation of children affected by war, implemented within the framework of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has for the last 10 years devoted much attention to addressing violence as a major public health problem. In October 2002, WHO launched a World Report on Violence and Health, which described the extent of violence as a global public health problem. It set out a prevention strategy and made nine recommendations that are the foundation of WHO's violence prevention work.

In 2002, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in collaboration with UNESCO, launched the "Education for All" Initiative as part of the follow-up to the World Summit on Social Development. The Initiative seeks to use education as a means of empowering rural people to become full actors, making them less vulnerable to conflict and more resilient to recover from conflict. The United Nations University organized two major research projects that are tied exclusively to the International Decade, the broad objective of which is to promote knowledge of the impact of armed conflict on children and the challenges involved in trying to improve their situation.

There is little doubt that the culture of peace is an ideal worthy of pursuit. It will take time for all aspects of the requirements and demands it poses to be realized. Some patience has to be exercised. Acceptance of the efforts exerted thus far by the United Nations is for the good of all. Demanding a lot more will be more destructive than constructive. A culture of peace is an ideal that requires a lot of deep thought to be fully absorbed and to replace current thinking. However, like all new innovative ideas, time is a prime requirement for shifting the paradigm.

Mr. Meyer (Brazil): My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for the preparation of the reports before the General Assembly.

Brazil is a strong supporter of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. The International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World has generated, and continues to generate, great interest in Brazil. At all levels of Government, in civil society and in the media, Brazil, as a traditionally peace-loving country, is increasingly committed to the promotion of a culture of peace through the promotion of democracy; human rights and the elimination of racism, xenophobia and related intolerance; gender equality and sustainable social and economic development, as well as the eradication of hunger, poverty and illiteracy. In our view, it has now become quite clear that, given the global revolution in information, domestic concerns and foreign policy and security considerations should be able to interact positively in the process of creating a better life for all.

Nearly 100 civil-society actors — including universities, schools, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector — are currently involved in 13 projects that are directly linked to the culture of peace. Over 15 million Brazilians have signed the 2000 Manifesto launched by UNESCO. Various programmes on the culture of peace have been developed in Brazil with the cooperation of UNESCO. Among them, seven of our states have already adopted the programme entitled "Making room: education and culture for peace", which outlines a strategy for opening schools on weekends for activities in the fields of sport, art, culture and leisure.

Moreover, there is great convergence between the principles established in the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace and Brazil's 2004 to 2007 multi-year strategic plan, entitled "Brazil for all". That plan identifies three major goals, namely, promoting social inclusion and reducing social inequality; achieving environmentally sustainable growth aimed at generating employment and income and reducing regional inequalities; and promoting and expanding citizenship and democracy.

With regard to education, Brazil's national human rights education programme provides a strong framework for the promotion of education that is fundamentally in line with the principles of the culture of peace. The plan outlines actions to promote a culture of respect for fundamental human rights through the participation of different groups from civil society and the institutions of the legal and justice systems. The programme is based on the belief that a situation of persistent violations can only be altered by fostering generations of citizens who are able to contribute to the strengthening of the rule of law and the culture of peace, who are conscious of their rights and of the means at their disposal for the protection of those rights and who are imbued with respect for plurality and cultural, sexual, ethnic, gender and religious diversity.

Also in line with the culture of peace is Brazil's handbook on religious diversity and human rights, which was issued after a process of consultations with religious leaders carried out over the course of nearly a year and a half. The handbook is based on the conviction that Brazil's plurality of races and cultures, as well as its religious freedom, makes it unique. It acknowledges, however, the persistence of some prejudice, particularly with regard to Afro-Brazilian, indigenous and Roma religious manifestations. It also states clearly that such prejudice is absolutely unacceptable and incompatible with Brazil's commitment to a culture of peace.

Finally, I would like to refer to the programme entitled "Brazil without homophobia", our national programme to combat violence and discrimination against gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual persons, as well as to promote citizenship among homosexuals. The programme outlines actions to strengthen public and non-governmental institutions involved in promoting citizenship among homosexuals and combating homophobia, build capacity among professionals and representatives of the homosexual movement active in the promotion of human rights, disseminate information on rights and the promotion of self-esteem among homosexuals and promote the filing of complaints on violations of the human rights of gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual persons.

It is Brazil's firm belief that the promotion of a culture of peace, to which we are all committed, must contain all the elements I have mentioned. A comprehensive culture of peace is an essential goal of our social and economic development.

Mr. Summaida'ie (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to join in the debate on agenda

items 43 and 42 on a culture of peace and the dialogue among civilizations. Consideration of those two items is of increasing importance today, first and foremost because of the rapid pace of political, economic and cultural change and scientific advances. Such transformations are the result of the unprecedented development of informatics and communications technology, which — whether we like it or not — will lead to coexistence in abstract and concrete terms.

We need a serious dialogue among civilizations in order to strengthen the culture of peace. There is a certain arrogant mindset, however, that seeks to impose its own culture by trying to marginalize other cultures, and that in turn has resulted in a movement rejecting that approach. Unfortunately, however, that movement is marked by a tendency to look to the past. That can lead only to conflict among civilizations. Let us hope that it is only a temporary trend, since it runs counter to the fervent desire of humankind for peaceful coexistence. We must not move backwards.

The dialogue among civilizations has been on the agenda of the General Assembly since 1998, and since the fifty-sixth session in 2001. All countries, specialized agencies of the United Nations and civil society organizations are called upon to take part in activities to promote a dialogue among cultures. By focusing on the importance of establishing peace, security and stability worldwide, the dialogue among civilizations has increasingly become a subject of popular and realistic discussion, and is no longer a purely philosophical concept. It promotes integration and has been widely accepted by various peoples, irrespective of their cultural and religious backgrounds.

A small minority is trying to counter that promising trend by attempting to exploit religion for purely political ends and to marginalize it by engaging in terrorist acts that have claimed thousands of innocent civilian lives. Such actions do not have a place in a tolerant society or a society that accepts change. We must therefore put a stop to such practices. We must stop all attempts to cause chaos and destruction. Peoples throughout the world are called upon to counter such acts, for terrorism knows no religion or nationality and has no homeland. As a result, it is divorced from everything that has to do with human civilization.

If the dialogue among civilizations is to be taken seriously, it must be based upon principles of democracy, freedom and justice with a view to strengthening the culture of peace. Those factors should have a positive impact on relationships between countries in terms of their various activities and the various aspects of their political, economic, cultural and scientific life.

Given the growing interdependence among all the countries and peoples of the world, no country, however powerful, can isolate itself from other countries. Humankind occupies a common domain that includes all civilizations. It is therefore only natural that genuine values of dialogue among cultures and civilizations should be strengthened considerably in order to enhance the culture of peace and promote greater understanding among religions and cultures so that harmony and cooperation can reign.

All civilizations are called upon to reject all negative practices in the quest for development and progress. We must do away with any sense of supremacy or pre-eminence. Civilizations that have made only limited progress to date in technology should not fall prey to feelings of inferiority. The path must be open to all human societies so that they can adapt to global change, which requires cooperation and true interdependence.

Thus, we all have the obligation to accept others and not reject them because of religious belief, lifestyle or cultural background. Religion should not be used as a pretext to marginalize or exclude others. We need to ensure that a culture of tolerance prevails, because hot spots of tension can emerge where extremism exists.

The United Nations system plays a leading role in the dialogue among civilizations because of its diversity. In that context, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) should play a key role, given the nature of its activities. We thank UNESCO for its efforts; we are fully confident that its medium-term strategy for 2002-2007, which takes into account the dialogue among civilizations, will play a successful role in making the dialogue a reality.

Mr. Neil (Jamaica): The Charter of the United Nations enjoins us, as Member States, to promote friendly relations based on peace and cooperation. International mechanisms to promote those objectives have their proper place and functions, seeking to regulate relations between States through the adoption of rules and norms of international law and through the

operation of mechanisms for conflict resolution and the peaceful settlement of disputes. But all that may not be enough if we are to succeed in saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

In their daily lives, people can play an important role in the advancement of global harmony, understanding and peaceful relations. The promotion of a culture of peace in all nations is essential in the light of our increased awareness of the potential for conflict in a diverse world with often conflicting interests.

At the Second South Summit of the Group of 77 and China, held in Qatar in June, heads of State or Government adopted the Doha Declaration, in which leaders recognized that respect for religious and cultural diversity in an increasingly globalized world contributes to international cooperation, promotes enhanced dialogue among religions, cultures and civilizations and helps to create an environment conducive to the exchange of human experience.

The global environment is one of diversity in culture, religion, political system and economic conditions. A process of deepening interdependence through increased communication and interchange among nations is taking place, especially within the process of globalization. That is a significant reality of our time. The greater the degree of contact, the greater the need for promoting ideals of tolerance and understanding of differences. One of the dangers of globalization is a tendency towards homogenization and the imposition of the cultural norms and standards of the strong, who have power and influence over those who are weak. Tensions will arise from such interactions. That danger can be averted by cultivating values that promote tolerance and respect for pluralism. All peoples have the right to live their lives in accordance with the principle of self-determination and the preservation of their cultural heritage.

In promoting a culture of tolerance and the ideal of peace, various sectors have an important role to play.

The first is the role of national institutions in the promotion of peaceful relations and the avoidance of conflict. Militarism, the development of sophisticated armaments and the glorification of military exploits undermine the inculcation of values of peace and non-violence in the process of socialization. School curricula at all levels should endeavour to provide guidance on the values of non-violence, tolerance and respect for diversity and the importance of peaceful methods of conflict resolution. Nowhere is it more important to promote those values and attitudes than among youth. That is the starting point for ensuring that non-violence is promoted in all our societies.

The second element is the role of civil society, which has a vital role to play in ensuring success in our overall effort. Peace movements and organizations, in their opposition to war, have played a significant role in the mobilization of public opinion. It is important that they be encouraged to build national and international coalitions and to exert influence, through the democratic process, on policies and actions of Governments in favour of peace.

The third element is the significant role of international and national media outlets in exercising greater responsibility in supporting the values of peace and cooperation among States. Too often, media presentations have demonstrated a tendency to highlight materials that generate patriotic fervour and encourage the resort to the use of force. Instead, there is need to give exposure to the horrors of war and civil conflict, which should persuade leaders and policymakers to look for peaceful solutions and avoid the military option. Also important is a reduction of the level of violence that is promoted in the entertainment industry, which influences young minds. It is important not to glorify or glamorize military exploits or violent conduct.

The fourth element is the work done by the United Nations system, in particular the work done by UNESCO in promoting the Programme of Action of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010. We welcome the information provided in the UNESCO report on the midterm global review of the International Decade (A/60/279), which outlines activities pursued in various agencies under the leadership of UNESCO. We are of the view that there is still considerable room for further work. Greater publicity needs to be given to the Programme through the Department of Public Information, and further efforts are needed to establish networks of relevant civil society organizations to generate greater awareness. There is need for further mobilization of human and material resources at all levels for activities that promote the various aspects of a culture of peace.

Jamaica is doing its part through its programmes in schools to promote a culture of peace and non-violence. The Jamaican Schools Improvement Peace Programme is one recent initiative. It does not use a pre-designed programme. The aim is for each school, in conjunction with the community, to assess its own needs and to conceive and build its own peace programme. Seven schools have been participating in that initiative under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture. Since 1994, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, there has been an ongoing school programme on the subject of peace that promotes the inculcation of the values of peace and non-violence among our young people.

Progress over the next five years will require the full involvement of national Governments, civil society and the mass media to support the Global Campaign. We continue to encourage the United Nations to play a central role in coordinating programmes and supporting initiatives at the national level.

We have also studied the report of the Secretary-General on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (A/60/259). The goals of that initiative to promote greater understanding among civilizations are of vital importance in the world today. Respect for diversity and an understanding that no civilization can claim superiority over others in values and achievements is an essential starting point for that global dialogue.

It is clear from reading the report that further steps need to be taken to advance the dialogue. Some of the ideas in the Secretary-General's report are useful, particularly in drawing attention to activities that can be pursued at the local level, where in many societies there are microcosms of different civilizations. That is a good approach, and will contribute to the success of the global dialogue.

Our delegation has some reservations on some of the ideas contained in the Secretary-General's report. In paragraph 16 of the report, it is suggested that the global dialogue is a response to terrorism. We have doubts about that analysis. We believe it is preferable to emphasize the interdependence of the global community, which brings about greater contact between diverse cultures and peoples.

As this process expands, it becomes more important to eliminate intolerance, extremism, polarization, enmity and conflict. The understanding and appreciation of the richness of diversity and the positive dimensions of all civilizations should be promoted in all societies. Jamaica will continue to support the global dialogue as part of the overall goal of strengthening the culture for peace.

Mrs. Laohaphan (Thailand): Let me begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his reports on the promotion of interreligious dialogue (*A/60/201*) and the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (*A/60/259*). I also wish to thank UNESCO for providing us with an extensive report on the midterm global review of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-1010 (*A/60/279*), as well as for having undertaken numerous initiatives in recent years to promote the Decade and the Global Agenda.

Manifesto 2000, which has been signed by over 75 million people worldwide, is a truly commendable initiative, and should be continued. Each and every one of us should serve as a messenger of peace and as a goodwill ambassador. For that reason, my delegation wishes to express our appreciation to civil society for engaging so actively in promoting the Decade and the Global Agenda.

My delegation welcomes the report on the contributions by almost 700 civil-society organizations from over 100 countries, as appears in the annex to UNESCO's report (*A/60/279*). We do recognize that Governments and civil society, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector, need to continue to work together closely to maintain the momentum of the Decade until its completion in 2010.

Thailand is supportive of many international initiatives in support of the culture of peace and the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. We are part of the Alliance of Civilizations, initiated by Spain and Turkey and announced in July 2005. Thailand is also part of the interfaith dialogue initiated by the Philippines, which held its summit at the General Assembly in September. We are traditional sponsors of the relevant draft resolutions submitted under these agenda items. We will continue to support all initiatives and efforts towards those ends.

Given the prevailing state of violence in the world, we do need more such initiatives, and we need to spread the message of peace and understanding as

far as we can. We need to put those words of goodwill into practice, and we need to make peace an integral part of or lives. Each individual, family and community must serve as a building block for global peace. Peace is not an ultimate idealistic end. Peace is a process. Peace is not merely the state of the absence of violence. Peace is about human security. It is about freedom to live free from want and fear, and about living in dignity. We need to create not only a culture of peace but an enabling environment for peace. If we live in the absence of violence but with an empty stomach, we will eventually return to conflicts. If we live with the absence of violence today but with mistrust for each other, that will lead to conflicts tomorrow. Peace is not a state frozen in time. We need to continually cultivate and foster it.

Can we really say to ourselves that any country is truly living in peace today? The world has become very interdependent. As members of the global family we are all vulnerable to violence and conflicts. On a global scale, we are living in daily risk of terrorist attacks. On a smaller scale, we are living in communities prone to conflicts. What factors contribute to depriving us of peace? Let me cite just three main factors: anger, greed and wrong thinking.

Anger is the most obvious factor for, and manifestation of, violence and conflict. On the ideological side, we need love, compassion and understanding to overcome anger. We need to think of others as members of our kin, and we need forgiveness. Has history not taught us that violence will only breed more violence? We need to realize that we are all in this together. No person, society or country will be safe if others are living in abject poverty and conflict. No arms or weapons will ever suffice to overcome human anger. To create a culture of peace, we need education that enhances understanding and fosters respect for diversity and differences. We also need to analyse factors that breed anger in many societies — such as marginalization, a sense of powerlessness and a perception that local traditions and identities are being attacked by the globalization process — so that we can effectively address them at an early stage.

Greed is another factor that undermines peace. Greed manifests itself in the form of competition for, and exploitation of, wealth and resources. That has led to conflicts everywhere in the world. Injustice is a fertile ground for breeding violence. In Africa, competition for natural resources is one of the main factors for the conflicts that have been plaguing the continent. Unjust economic competition and business rivalries, in all of their sophisticated forms, can also produce breeding grounds for mistrust and conflicts among nations.

In mentioning greed and exploitation, my delegation would like to highlight one fact: we must live in peace not only with one another, but also with nature and the environment. To ensure sustainable peace, we must respect the environment. If we live without sufficiently caring for our environment, we will find ourselves in a very perilous situation one day. Today, the world is beginning to show many signs of weariness, with the increasing incidence of natural disasters — including the tsunami in the Indian Ocean, Hurricanes Ivan, Emily and Katrina, the mudslide in Guatemala and the earthquakes in Pakistan and India — and the consequent tragic losses of lives. Even if we can live with our neighbours without conflict, we find ourselves vulnerable to natural risks. We need to recognize the butterfly effect: what we do in our very own homes will affect our brothers and sisters in a distant corner of the world. To cultivate a culture of peace, then, is not only to do away with conflict, anger and hatred, but also to stress the need to lessen — if not eliminate — our greed and to instil a sense of responsibility in all of us to respect and protect Mother Nature.

One other factor that seriously threatens peace everywhere is wrong thinking. We should begin engaging in right thinking — the idea that, despite our differences and diversity, we can all live together in peace and harmony. We must learn to make room for compromise. We might say that we do not choose to live with people from another country whose religion is very different from ours, whose skin is of another colour and whose thinking we do not share. But do we really have any choice? Like it or not, we are bound together by humanity. We are all in this boat together, and we must recognize that fact and try to do our best to live together in peace and harmony.

Of course, we need tools to assist us in recognizing that fact. Governments must ensure that education, both formal and informal, at all levels will lend itself to creating understanding, tolerance and respect for diversity. History should be written to record facts and to provide useful lessons so as not to repeat itself. We must make conscientious efforts to do

away with wrong perceptions, misunderstandings and ignorance.

Children and young people from various cultures should be encouraged to meet and exchange their views and experiences. Bringing together children and young people from countries engaged in armed conflict and enabling them to understand each other's worlds is a step forward in creating peace over the long term. Teaching children about the cost of violence and conflict can also be an investment in peace.

The use of media can be of tremendous value in cultivating a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations. The media must be responsible and must uphold ethical standards in reporting. The communication and advertising industries must think not only in terms of profits, but also in terms of social impacts. The incitement of hatred and stereotyping must be done away with altogether. We should think twice about the use of video games with simulated scenes of violence among children. Indeed, we should not allow ourselves to become accustomed to violence. Parents should be responsible not only towards their children, but towards society. Governments must work with parents to provide an environment in which children can grow up into responsible citizens. Education, work and daily life must have the sole purpose of peace.

At the September summit, our leaders recognized the linkages among development, peace and security and human rights. That is not simply a political message intended for a lofty level of discourse; it is a working philosophy that needs to be put into practice. In our future initiatives and activities to promote a culture of peace and the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, we need to reflect on the critical linkages among development, peace and security and human rights. Peace will need to be cultivated in a holistic manner, both in terms of ideology and of real practice, both in our minds and on the ground.

In that regard, my delegation supports the various recommendations of UNESCO contained in document A/60/279, which seek, among others, to develop coordination mechanisms at the international, regional and national levels to strengthen cooperation among all relevant actors — the United Nations system, Member States, civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations; to reinforce more explicitly the links with other international decades or years, such as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development — 2005-2014 and the Millennium Development Goals; to develop communication and information tools that will perpetuate the global momentum for the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations; and to encourage the mass media at the international and national levels to support a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations.

Peace is a process. Peace is multidimensional and must be cultivated and fostered in a comprehensive manner. Each and every one of us can be a messenger of peace. My delegation hopes that, in a few years' time, it can look back upon the completion of the Decade and see that our world has become safer from violence and conflicts, from terrorist attacks and natural disasters and from other threats. We do not have to look elsewhere; we must look to ourselves. We must be kind to our neighbours and responsible towards Mother Nature. A culture of peace will not begin elsewhere; it will begin with us.

Mr. Martínez (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Government of the Republic of El Salvador is convinced of the need to consider the subject of a culture of peace at this plenary meeting, bearing in mind the reaffirmation of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace and the World Programme of Action for a Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action, contained in the outcome document (*resolution 60/1*) of the 2005 world summit.

El Salvador welcomes the midterm global review of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010 (*A/60/279*). The report sets out guidelines for evaluating the various initiatives in this area launched by Governments, civil society, international organizations and the United Nations system. In addition, it enables us to consider the need to more closely link the progress made in implementing the Millennium Development Goals with the objectives established for the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010. In that context, it is important to stress that the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace constitute a broad and comprehensive framework for promoting and consolidating a culture of peace at the national and international levels.

As we have recognized on various occasions, peace is not only the absence of conflict; it also entails a conscious effort of creation and empowerment in the minds of human beings. The concept of a culture of peace is closely linked to dialogue and an alliance among civilizations. We have recognized that all cultures and civilizations stand on an equal footing and that dialogue must be based on shared values and principles promoted by a culture of peace: inter alia, tolerance, respect for others, mutual understanding, respect for cultural diversity and support for non-violence and the principles of peaceful coexistence. In that context, the Government of El Salvador reaffirms its support for the Alliance of Civilizations initiative announced by the Secretary-General on 14 July 2005 and promoted by Spain and Turkey, among other countries.

In the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, entitled "A more secure world: our shared responsibility" (*A/59/565*), it is made clear that the very concept of the United Nations in 1945 was a response to the collective desire to build a culture of peace. Moreover, the main challenge of the twenty-first century is to expand and place in context the meaning of collective security, together with all the responsibilities, commitments, strategies and institutions required for the establishment of an effective, efficient and equitable collective security system.

Support for a culture of peace and for dialogue among cultures and civilizations is a substantial part of that effort; indeed, globalization and the emergence of new threats and challenges to humanity require such support. Suffice it to recall that new information technologies, the greater level of regional integration and the dynamic flows of national and international migration enable people from all over the world to get to know each other, talk about their differences and exchange ideas, knowledge and values.

In that context, my Government reaffirms its commitment to and recognition of the right to peace as one of the fundamental pillars of the ideology of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is a third-generation right that this Assembly recognized in resolution 39/11 of 12 November 1984, and it was reaffirmed by the States members of the Organization of American States (OAS) in the Reaffirmation of Caracas, when we commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the OAS Charter.

We recognize the fundamental role of education in building and consolidating a culture of peace. In that respect, we welcome the efforts of the United Nations system — in particular, UNESCO — in strengthening their activities for education for peace, human rights and linguistic diversity, as well as technical cooperation efforts with Member States to complement national action. We agree on the need to create machinery to coordinate at every level, in order to intensify cooperation among all relevant actors in the promotion and consolidation of a culture of peace.

Allow me to conclude by reaffirming the political will of El Salvador regarding the promotion and consolidation of a culture of peace, as well as the need to achieve the proposals of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010.

Mr. Laassel (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): My statement will address agenda item 42 on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, and agenda item 43 on a culture of peace. My delegation takes this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his note on the Midterm global review of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010 (*A/60/279*) and his reports on the state of the Global Agenda for Dialogue Among Civilizations (*A/60/259*) and the promotion of interreligious dialogue (*A/60/201*).

The promotion of interreligious dialogue and dialogue among civilizations are, in our point of view, two components of the same action to fight obscurantism and extremism of all types. To be sure, communication is the sole means to understand others. Such understanding guarantees tolerance, which in turn generates respect — a key factor for peaceful coexistence among peoples, religions and civilizations.

From that standpoint, we should therefore encourage the efforts of UNESCO, working together with civil society, to promote dialogue among peoples, via the Mondialogo initiative. In fact, the resolution adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO on new prospects for activities of UNESCO with respect to a dialogue among civilizations and in particular, the follow-up to the Ministerial Conference of New Delhi, gives that organization the legal basis to launch initiatives at the national, regional and international levels by joining with many non-governmental and

governmental players. The international community and civil society need to associate themselves with the implementation of those initiatives.

The rise of extremism and fanaticism that are not specific to any religion or civilization, is of great concern. The search for the causes of that phenomenon will bring to light insufficient dialogue and inadequate channels of knowledge and reciprocal knowledge. The remedy to the situation lies in increasing cultural, inter-ethnic and inter-civilizational efforts aimed at promoting contact between communities and enabling better interaction between peoples.

The great number of festivals, cultural events, sports events and religious conferences organized in recent years attest to the collective awareness that dialogue is a key factor in establishing peace. However, it is no less true that dialogue can only be constructive if it is put on solid footing. The commitment of the international community is necessary in order to disseminate a culture of peace, based upon adherence to the principles of freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity and cooperation, pluralism and cultural diversity. It must also be based upon dialogue and understanding at all levels of society and among nations.

The adoption of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity on 2 November 2001 once again confirmed the commitment of that organization to promote the fertile diversity of cultures for a more open and more creative world in the new context of the twenty-first century, which will make it possible to strengthen the dialogue.

The legal instruments for cultural diversity have just been enriched today by UNESCO's adoption, by an overwhelming majority, of the Convention on Cultural Diversity, which removes culture from the rules of international trade. The many ratifications will confirm the overall awareness of the role that respect for cultural diversity can play in the peaceful coexistence among peoples.

It would also be appropriate to carry out a comparative study of existing initiatives in order to make up the shortcomings. UNESCO is, in our view, the appropriate organization to carry out that kind of survey. It should be called upon to provide its assistance to all those who are working towards that same end. The media could be involved to genuinely present religions as instruments of peace.

Certain of the virtues of dialogue, I welcomed the decision of the Secretary-Ge United Nations to establish a high-level wo on the alliance of civilizations. Initiate friendly countries — Spain and Turkey — t group, which also includes an eminent Mo been instructed to propose common actions the causes and consequences of the diff understanding.

In that context, Morocco initiated Declaration adopted by experts working o called "Roads of Faith" on 23 June 19 proposed that the Director General of establish institutes to study the three m scriptures. Experts of the three monotheisti and their specific cultures would seek nev dialogue by going beyond the conventional of the history of compared religions. Teache in this area should also share the same ideal

In addition, my country, favoure geographic and historical location, has alwa the crossroads of civilizations and relig special role is at the root of its commi decades now, to interreligious dialogue. regularly hosts events and conferences in tha most recent — an international confe educators, journalists, artists, writers governmental specialized organizations, a religious and spiritual leaders, scientists, eng various technical experts — took place in 14-16 July 2005.

That conference adopted a plan of act implementation of dialogue through educatio the sciences, communication and inform addition and given that the new i technologies now play a key role in the culture and promotion of dialogue amon Morocco supported the initiative that was pr His Excellency, Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, Pr Senegal, at the first phase of the World Sum Information Society, in which he calle establishment of a digital solidarity fund. M has contributed 300,000 euros to that fund.

The Kingdom of Morocco sponso resolutions A/60/L.4, A/60/L.5 and A/60/L. respectively, "Promotion of interreligious di cooperation for peace", "International Dec Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the

the World, 2001-2010" and "Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations".

Convinced of the relevancy of the message conveyed by those drafts and in accordance with its commitment to a culture of dialogue for peace, we hope that the sixtieth session of the General Assembly will adopt the drafts by consensus.

Mr. Shrestha (Nepal): We are living in a world characterized by great possibilities and uncertainties. On the one hand, thanks to human genius and human prowess, the world has never been as close and interlinked as it is today. Physical distances have been increasingly blurred, and the world has become as one family. We are more familiar with each other's languages, cultures, traditions, music, literature, sports and so on. Growing interconnectedness and interdependence, which is the hallmark of the new millennium, has been a major unifying force, bringing nations and civilizations ever closer.

On the other hand, the world has also witnessed the unfortunate saga created by disruptive and divisive forces in the form of war, civil strife, ethnic and religious intolerance, hatred, violence and, lately, the threatening menace of terrorism. Those ugly and disruptive forces are having a severe impact on the bedrock of humankind's core values and human civilizations.

Herein lies the significance of the culture of peace, which rejects the culture of violence, extremism and fanaticism and adheres to the universal values of tolerance, solidarity, dignity and harmony. Those are the cardinal principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, which was created to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Rejecting the culture of violence and discord and replacing it with the culture of peace and harmony would constitute an important step towards the achievement of those noble objectives.

The 2005 Summit Outcome recognized that all cultures and civilizations contribute to the enrichment of humankind. That document also stressed the need to encourage tolerance, respect, dialogue and cooperation among different cultures, civilizations and people.

Participants at the summit also committed themselves to creating a world fit for future generations while taking into account the best interests of children. That can only be realized if children can be saved from forceful abduction by terrorists to become child soldiers. Their tender hands should have pens and pencils in them, and should never be forced to use grenades and bombs. Educational institutions should be declared zones of peace, to help nurture young children in a peaceful atmosphere. Gun culture should have no place in a child's mind. Children must always be brought up a climate of peace and harmony.

UNESCO has made a valuable contribution to instilling a culture of peace and non-violence in children by carrying out various activities aimed at children's' welfare. We commend the leading role of UNESCO in the implementation of programmes to observe the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010. We strongly call for more targeted and focused activities for children, especially in countries seriously affected by conflict.

Translating those commitments into reality will make a real difference in promoting peace and harmony and greater understanding and cooperation in the world. The continued interfaith dialogue and interaction among civilizations are important to appreciating the core human values they espouse. Tripartite interaction among intergovernmental organizations, the United Nations system and civil society is critical for cross-cultural exchanges and dialogue, which will contribute to peace and harmony among different cultures.

Nepal is the birthplace of Lord Buddha — apostle of peace and harmony, whose teachings of peace, compassion, non-violence and tolerance remain as relevant as ever and have become much more pertinent in our turbulent times. His message of peace and harmony has resonance in every civilization, culture and faith, and provides the guiding principles for the United Nations. Nepal is committed to develop Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, as the fountain of world peace and a world peace city, where people can go to meditate on world peace, hold discourses on the Buddha's teachings and carry out research on his teachings to promote peace and harmony.

We are encouraged by the renewed commitment shown by the International Committee for the Development of Lumbini at a meeting held at United Nations Headquarters on 16 September 2005. The outcome document of that meeting, which is contained

in document A/60/407, testifies to the desire of the international community to extend support and cooperation for the early completion of the projects of the Lumbini development master plan. We are happy to inform the Assembly that significant progress has been made in the implementation of the master plan, although several projects remain to be completed. The invaluable support and cooperation of the United Nations and the international community will go a long way towards the realization of our cherished dream to develop Lumbini as a fountain of world peace and a world peace city. It is our fervent belief that the realization of this cherished dream will significantly contribute to the agenda of the United Nations for the advancement of the culture of peace in the world.

Mr. Kazykhanov (Kazakhstan): By proclaiming the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010, the General Assembly set the course for the United Nations towards a just and peaceful world. We hope that joint efforts by the international community in eight concrete areas — from education to global peace and security — and the consistent implementation of the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace will facilitate the successful transition to a culture of peace and non-violence. In that context, UNESCO, the lead United Nations agency for the Decade, must continue to play an important role.

We are now at the midpoint of the Decade, and there is a need for more advanced and coordinated action. In our judgement, priority should be given to education, including the teaching of the practice of peace and non-violence to children. In the broadest sense of that term, the family, the media and other social and educational institutions should be more actively engaged in activities in this area.

We appreciate the efforts of the delegation of Bangladesh, which have contributed in a significant way to the preparation of the new draft resolution on the culture of peace, which has been co-sponsored by a large number of countries, including Kazakhstan. The draft resolution emphasizes respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialogue and understanding as a means of establishing peace and stability.

It is in this spirit that the delegation of Kazakhstan, among others, is a sponsor of the draft resolution entitled "Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations" (A/60/L.6), which underlines that tolerance is one of the fundamental values essential to international relations in the twenty-first century. As stressed in the 2005 World Summit Outcome, all cultures and civilizations contribute to the enrichment of humankind and it is very important to respect and understand religions and cultural diversity throughout the world.

An interfaith dialogue is an integral part of the efforts to promote the culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations. Dialogue among religions is aimed at advocating the culture of peace and at promoting the common values of the Millennium Declaration. Such a dialogue helps to develop understanding and tolerance, while strengthening friendship among peoples amidst the multiplicity of their religions, faiths, cultures and languages.

One of the basic principles of the United Nations consists in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. We welcome the closer attention being paid by the United Nations to the development of interreligious dialogue for peace. In recent years, the General Assembly has adopted a number of important resolutions on the promotion of interreligious dialogue, the development of mutual understanding, harmony and cooperation between religions and cultures, and the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance. Kazakhstan supported and was a sponsor of those resolutions.

In Kazakhstan, we are convinced that efforts to strengthen peace and security and ensure prosperity in the twenty-first century increasingly depend on the pursuit of dialogue and interaction among peoples of different faiths, cultures and traditions. We believe that Governments, civil society, the media, the private sector and international organizations must be closely engaged in strengthening interreligious ties.

It is very important to take practical steps to strengthen cooperation among different religions, particularly in the areas of education and the mass media, and to reinforce mutual understanding in order to overcome intolerance and to counter stereotypes. We consider it important to study, disseminate and put into practice lessons learned by different countries in developing interreligious dialogue. That is why Kazakhstan has come up with the initiative of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional

Religions, which was held in Astana in September 2003 with representatives of nearly all world and traditional religions participating. The Congress succeeded in institutionalizing the interreligious dialogue process by establishing a permanent secretariat. The Second Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions is to be held next year in Astana to discuss the issues of religion, society and international security.

It is also important to ensure that regional organizations actively participate in the dialogue. In this regard Kazakhstan has offered to host a conference of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on interfaith accord next spring. It is with that understanding that we became active supporters and a sponsor of an informal meeting of leaders on interfaith dialogue and cooperation for peace held in New York on 13 September 2005. The Declaration on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace adopted at that meeting invites, inter alia, the international community to intensify cooperation at the international, regional and national levels in the implementation of existing United Nations programmes for the promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations.

Kazakhstan appreciates the efforts of the Secretary-General and United Nations Member States to make positive contributions to a culture of peace and stands ready to collaborate with the international community in implementing the programme of action on a culture of peace. Let me voice our confidence that dialogue and cooperation among religions, cultures and civilizations will result in joint practical measures promoting just and durable peace.

Mr. Yanez-Barnuevo (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am particularly gratified to be speaking under Mr. Jan Eliasson's presidency, and I would like to start by fully associating myself with what was said this morning by the United Kingdom in its capacity in the presidency of the European Union.

The Spanish delegation welcomes the opportunity to speak during this joint debate on matters of such great importance to the development of peaceful relations among peoples and nations. We would like to do this particularly under one item in the Assembly's programme of work, and that is the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations.

In keeping with the mandate in General Assembly resolution 56/6 of 9 November 2001, on the Global Agenda, the Secretary-General's report demonstrates how much progress has been achieved by States and civil society organizations, as well as by some United Nations organizations, in developing activities within the context of the Programme of Action. The compilation of the information received on activities undertaken highlights the seminal character of the initiative taken in 1998 by the then President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Seyed Mohammad Khatami. His proposal was followed by suggestions from various Member States of the Organization, and they have given rise to particular interest from many others who have lent their support, as well as from international institutions of all types.

UNESCO has played an important part as a catalyst for proposals, initiatives and thinking. The Organization of the Islamic Conference, among others, has also mobilized efforts and concrete actions to attain the objectives of the Programme of Action. This has all served to promote proposals for the development of a culture of peace, which was welcomed in Assembly resolution 59/142 of 15 December 2004.

Spain supports these initiatives and activities and fully shares the common goals of generating greater understanding and overcoming prejudice and misperceptions of others and any polarization in relations that might imperil stability or world peace. That is why the Spanish delegation worked with many others to ensure that our common goals would be appropriately reflected in the outcome document of the summit (*resolution 60/1*), adopted this past 16 September. In paragraph 144 of that document is a specific reference to the initiative for an Alliance of Civilizations, which the President of the Spanish Government, jointly with the Prime Minister of Turkey, presented to the Secretary-General, who endorsed it on 14 July. As is well known, the Secretary-General has decided to establish a High-level Group to consider and propose concrete measures to activate the Alliance of Civilizations.

The Alliance of Civilizations initiative is not meant to replace or marginalize other efforts by the international community to promote greater understanding among peoples and nations belonging to different cultures. The concept document presented by the Secretary-General with the support of Spain and Turkey is based on the desire to use other, earlier orientations and initiatives. The aim of the Alliance is to direct the international community's actions at a

distinct new level, with a particular focus on relations between the West and the Islamic world, dealing, in general, with common problems that arise in all cultures and societies. The Alliance seeks to give a central role back to people of goodwill, rather than to fanatics and extremists who foment division and hate.

To that end, the High-level Group for the Alliance of Civilizations should propose to the Secretary-General and, through him, to the international community strategies and practical actions to be implemented by Governments, international organizations and civil society actors. As stated in the report of the Secretary-General (*A/60/259*), the most urgent task is to devise a strategy through which to create a coalition of all those peoples who do not believe in inciting violence or support extremism – and who surely make up the great majority of humankind. In the opinion of the Secretary-General, the Alliance of Civilizations would be the appropriate forum within which to devise such a strategy.

Spain is firmly convinced of that and joins the Secretary-General's call for an Alliance of Civilizations, which continues to receive significant support from States, international organizations and social actors. Now is the moment for States and organizations to contribute ideas and proposals for the preparation of the strategies needed by the Alliance. It is important to pursue implementation of the various initiatives, as the 1998 call for a Dialogue among Civilizations (*resolution 53/22*) continues to bear fruit and contribute to collective actions and reflection.

In that context, Spain believes it is important, among other things, to pursue the considerations reflected in the draft resolution presented by the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (*A/60/L.6*). For that reason, Spain has joined the list of sponsors of that draft resolution. Likewise, the draft resolution presented by the delegation of Bangladesh on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children (*A/60/L.5*) and the draft resolution presented by the delegation of the Philippines on the promotion of interreligious dialogue and cooperation for peace (*A/60/L.4*) are highly valuable and demonstrate the crucial importance of the issue under our consideration and the need to defend those values, which Spain shares and actively promotes.

Spain will host the first meeting of the High-level Group for the Alliance of Civilizations, to be held in Palma de Mallorca in November. We hope that, during that meeting, the first effective steps will be taken to overcome what some have called the ideology of fear. It is the ideology of fear that incites fear and conflictive perceptions of other peoples, with the very harmful effects with which we are familiar, in relations among political, cultural and religious communities and which takes advantage of that fear and erroneous perceptions to achieve its ends. Overcoming the ideology of fear will require practical actions in the political, cultural, religious and educational spheres as well as in the media, among other areas, with particular emphasis on youth and with an eye to the future.

The Alliance of Civilizations must be a sustained, long-term action if it is to be a catalyst for a genuinely universal awareness of the importance of the task we face. In order to succeed, the virtue of modesty needs the support of hard work. That can be achieved through tireless efforts in day-to-day activities and by taking timely, concrete actions at the local, national, regional and international levels. In short, it is a question of moving beyond the indispensable dialogue and taking common action — doing things together in unity — at times overcoming our differences and at other times taking strength from the diversity that enriches our relations.

That is the path for the initiative of the Alliance of Civilizations, and that is the understanding of the Secretary-General. We want to reaffirm our support for the decisions that the Secretary-General took so that the Alliance of Civilizations can take shape in accordance with the work plan set out. We are convinced that it is an objective deserving of the wholehearted support of all Member States. We hope that will be the case.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3369 (XXX) of 10 October 1975, I call on the observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. Wahab (Organization of the Islamic Conference): We would like to express our profound appreciation for the initiative of Bangladesh on a culture of peace (*A/60/L.5*), and that of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the dialogue among civilizations (*A/60/L.6*). We would also like to thank those Member States that are taking the initiative of promoting

interreligious dialogue and cooperation by creating institutions addressing the causes of peace, pluralism, dialogue and understanding among nations and civilizations.

We greatly appreciate the Secretary-General's efforts to respond to the need to bridge divides and overcome prejudice, misconceptions, misperceptions and polarization. The excellent work being done on those issues by some of the agencies of the United Nations system, in particular UNESCO, deserves our special thanks.

All civilizations, religions and cultures welcome unity and diversity of the human race. History shows us that all civilizations have been enriched and developed through dialogue and interaction with other civilizations. History also shows us that the lack of shared knowledge and understanding and the lack of respect for various cultures and civilizations can impact negatively on regional and international security, stability and prosperity.

Today, globalization has brought about greater interaction among various nations and civilizations. The process of globalization has the potential to facilitate the promotion of understanding, peaceful coexistence and cooperation among various nations and civilizations. But it also has the potential to provoke cross-civilizational misunderstanding. Today, we find many barriers of accumulated misunderstanding and the vestiges of ideas that often have faulty foundations.

We believe that the dissemination of erroneous concepts through the media and education systems gives rise to ideological deviation, which can harm the interests of all humankind. We believe, furthermore, that the frequent placing of the term "Islamic" before the word "terrorism" is a sacrilege. It is highly dangerous. We believe that utmost care should be exercised not to create a perception that might lead to enmity based on religious grounds among hundreds of millions of people.

Media and education complement one another and there is a dire need to deploy media and educational strategies around the world, in each country, to address deviant thoughts. Media institutions should be encouraged to play a role in spreading the culture of dialogue and tolerance, based on the recognition of cultural pluralism. The culture of dialogue and mutual understanding should be adopted in school curricula and textbooks. Curricula and textbooks must be cleansed of non-objective statements about the cultures of others and of all that can trigger feelings of hatred towards others. It is important to encourage the exchange of media materials that can familiarize their users with the cultures of peoples and promote the learning of languages and translation activities, so as to break down cultural barriers.

Islam advocates compassion, tolerance and coexistence among all peoples of the world. Since its inception, the OIC has been making serious efforts to strengthen ties among Muslim peoples and the peoples of the world in general. The OIC has been organizing symposia and seminars in coordination with other concerned institutions for the promotion of cultural and civilizational dialogue. We believe that dialogue among various cultures and civilizations should be based on mutual respect. We believe that sincere and sustained dialogue will foster mutual understanding, appreciation and respect among nations and civilizations.

In his visit to the Council of Europe a fortnight ago, the Secretary General of the OIC, Mr. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, had highly useful discussions on ways and means of promoting dialogue and cooperation. We hope that the OIC and the Council of Europe will work jointly to address the challenges of international terrorism and Islamophobia. The OIC and its Secretary General stand ready to work together with all national, regional and international institutions to promote harmony, cooperation and mutual understanding.

Before concluding, we would like to express our earnest hope that the draft resolutions of Bangladesh and the Islamic Republic of Iran before the Assembly and a draft resolution to be presented by Pakistan will be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have now heard the last speaker in the debate on these items.

Before we proceed further, I should like to inform Assembly members that, at the request of the sponsors, action on draft resolution A/60/L.4 will be taken at a later date.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/60/L.5 and A/60/L.6, as orally revised.

We will start with draft resolution A/60/L.5, entitled "International Decade for a Culture of Peace

and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010". Let me add that the following countries have joined as sponsors: Brunei Darussalam, Guinea-Bissau, Marshall Islands and Myanmar.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/60/L.5?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 60/3).

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We now turn to draft resolution A/60/L.6, entitled "Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations", as orally revised.

I would like to read the list of the following new sponsors: Austria, Bhutan, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Guinea-Bissau, Iceland, Jamaica, Liberia, Monaco, Paraguay, Republic of Moldova, Sierra Leone, Sweden and Ukraine.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/60/L.6, as orally revised?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 60/4).

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before giving the floor to the speaker or speakers in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to ten minutes, and they should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Garcia-Matos (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela fully supports the contents and significance of the culture of peace and the dialogue among civilizations. They form a substantive part of the revolutionary project of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

My Government's position is that knowledge of, and constructive acceptance of, different cultures is an essential prerequisite for the establishment of the dialogue of peace, which will enable us to build and strengthen our societies, in particular as regards teaching children about non-violence. This is why we support the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World.

However, despite the great importance our State attaches to this topic, we will not be co-sponsoring the current draft resolutions, because we have reservations on the thirteenth preambular paragraph of A/60/L.5 and the fourth preambular paragraph of A/60/L.6. The reason for this is that there are references to the 2005 World Summit Outcome document. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela sees that document as a simple working draft that does not give rise to any mandate or obligation for the Republic, because of its flawed character.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly has concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 42 and 43.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.

United Nations A/60/PV.37

General Assembly
Sixtieth session

Official Records

37th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 25 October 2005, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Earthquake in South Asia

The President: On 10 October, I expressed the General Assembly's solidarity with the people of Pakistan and its neighbours, India and Afghanistan, who had been tragically affected by the devastating earthquake two days earlier.

Since then, we have all watched with horror as the full scale and impact of the South Asian earthquake have become clearer. We now know that an area of 28,000 square miles was devastated by the quake; entire towns and villages have literally disappeared off the face of the Earth. More than 50,000 people have been confirmed dead, including a great number of children. A further 75,000 people were injured. One million people are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance, and three million are without shelter. Those figures almost defy comprehension, but the expectations are that the numbers will rise still further.

While Pakistan bore the overwhelming brunt of the disaster, over 1,300 people were killed elsewhere in the region. We stand in solidarity with the Governments and peoples of Pakistan, India and Afghanistan as they continue to respond to the impact of the disaster.

In Pakistan, the needs of the people are enormous and they are urgent. There is a three-week window of opportunity to deliver aid to the mountains before the first snowfall. If that is not done, the grim reality is that there will be a further dramatic rise in the death toll.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has called a ministerial meeting in Geneva tomorrow to review the response to date by the international community. The Secretary-General will be present. I am fully confident that Member States will ensure that they are represented at the appropriate level and that they will make adequate funds available so that the humanitarian agencies can respond as quickly as possible.

In the coming weeks, the United Nations will need to ensure that proper planning for long-term reconstruction is under way. I am sure that the General Assembly will want to play its part in this. But this week our focus must be on ensuring that the basics of survival get to those who need them — to the hundreds of thousands of people who, right now, are huddled together in the cold and dark in the hills and mountains of northern Pakistan. They need winter tents, blankets, sleeping bags, stoves, kitchen sets, fuel, clean water and vaccinations. More mobile health-care teams are needed to administer help to the injured, and they will need food through the long, harsh winter.

This year, the United Nations has responded to a succession of devastating natural disasters, the frequency and intensity of which have been almost unprecedented. The Secretary-General has described the response to the South Asian earthquake as the most challenging relief operation ever faced by the United Nations. Our response to this disaster will be no less

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than a measure of our common humanity. Yesterday we celebrated the sixtieth birthday of the United Nations. Tomorrow, in Geneva, we must show the world what this Organization, and the international community, can deliver.

Agenda item 41

Report of the Economic and Social Council

Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/60/3)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/114)

Notes by the Secretary-General (A/60/167 and A/60/397)

The President: In connection with this item, I would like to recall for the members of the General Assembly that, pursuant to resolution 58/316 of 1 July 2004, the Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided at its 17th plenary meeting, on 20 September 2005, to consider agenda item 41 in its entirety in plenary, on the understanding that the administrative, programme and budgetary aspects should be dealt with by the Fifth Committee.

At the same meeting, the Assembly took note of the clarification that in implementing resolution 58/316 to consider item 41 in its entirety in plenary, the relevant parts of chapter I of the report that are under agenda items already allocated to the Main Committees will be considered by the Committee concerned for final action by the General Assembly.

Under this item, the Assembly has before it the report of the Economic and Social Council (*A/60/3*). It is my understanding that an addendum to the report of the Economic and Social Council will be issued at a later date.

Under the same item, the Assembly also has before it a report of the Secretary-General (*A/60/114*) and two notes by the Secretary-General transmitting the report by the World Tourism Organization, circulated in document A/60/167, and the report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (*A/60/397*).

I give the floor to the President of the Economic and Social Council, Mr. Munir Akram, to introduce the report of the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan), President of the Economic and Social Council: Before I turn to the presentation of the report of the Economic and Social Council, may I, in my capacity as the Permanent Representative of Pakistan, thank you, Mr. President, for your words of sympathy and support expressed to the people and the Government of Pakistan in this hour of trial and tribulation. Undoubtedly, the disaster which we have experienced is unprecedented in its scale and devastation.

Even worse, we fear a second disaster looms for millions of destitute survivors and injured people unless help arrives before the winter. We are racing against time. As the Secretary-General has warned, if we do not step up our efforts for relief assistance, a massive second wave of deaths will happen. We are grateful for the support of the international community — from Governments, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and private individuals. I understand that, in response to the United Nations South Asia earthquake 2005 flash appeal for $312 million, $60 million has been contributed so far and another $30 million pledged.

Mr. President, you have mentioned the high-level donors meeting tomorrow in Geneva, which will be attended by the Secretary-General. We look forward to high-level participation and generous support at that meeting.

We are confident that the international community will sustain its support and solidarity as we mobilize our efforts to save lives and subsequently to rehabilitate and reconstruct broken families and devastated homes and infrastructure. The Government of Pakistan, with the support of the international community and of its own people, will soon be turning to this task.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform colleagues that, following consultations, Pakistan will soon submit a draft resolution in the General Assembly regarding the earthquake disaster in South Asia, which has so devastatingly affected Pakistan.

Turning to the report of the Economic and Social Council, I have the honour and privilege of submitting it for the consideration of the General Assembly. The report is contained in document A/60/3 and A/60/3/Add.1, which will be issued subsequently.

Let me avail myself of this opportunity to present to the Assembly a brief overview of the Council's activities during this momentous year.

The Economic and Social Council substantive session for 2005 was deliberately conceptualized as a part of the preparations for the 2005 world summit. All segments of the session focused primarily on the theme of achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Both at the spring meeting and during the substantive session, there was an encouragingly high level of participation and involvement from Governments, international institutions and civil society.

A key innovation introduced at this year's session was a segment on "voices against poverty". It provided a refreshing perspective on development by sending out the following four powerful messages.

First, the systemic basis for widespread poverty, symbolized by the unfair system of global trade and finance, remains, unfortunately, intact; secondly, economic growth and poverty eradication requires deliberate policies, inter alia to redress the phenomena of jobless growth; thirdly, the proliferation of conflicts has generated millions of refugees and internally displaced persons for whom the Millennium Development Goals are remote; and fourthly, the Economic and Social Council has a unique role in providing system-wide policy coherence and coordination.

Several other important messages were conveyed during the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council.

First, we are off track with respect to the achievement of most of the Millennium Development Goals in many countries. An accelerated and concerted effort is required to achieve the MDGs.

Secondly, the United Nations system has come together behind the MDGs. There is now a United Nations development agenda. But a fully integrated follow-up to realize the development goals adopted at various United Nations conferences has yet to emerge.

Thirdly, international development cooperation remains critical in enabling most developing countries to implement the United Nations development agenda.

Fourthly, security and development are inextricably linked. Without peace and stability, countries are not likely to achieve the development goals.

Fifthly, humanitarian emergencies are increasing and need to be addressed through a comprehensive and coordinated response.

Sixthly, there was a wide recognition of the central role that the Economic and Social Council can play in promoting the international development agenda. The Council should be strengthened to effectively fulfil its Charter mandate.

The Economic and Social Council had a rich discussion on how that could be achieved. Following that, specific proposals were developed, which I had the privilege of submitting to the preparatory process at the 2005 summit. The summit recognized the need for a more effective Economic and Social Council and took several decisions to enhance its role in five specific areas.

The first area is policy dialogue and implementation. The summit called upon the Economic and Social Council to promote global dialogue and partnership on global policies and trends and assess progress in the follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. To that end, the Council should hold annual ministerial-level substantive reviews to assess progress, drawing on its functional and regional commissions and other international institutions, in accordance with their respective mandates.

The second area is the Economic and Social Council as a development cooperation forum. The Council should convene a biennial high-level development cooperation forum to review trends in international development cooperation policies and to promote greater coherence among the development activities of different entities and institutions.

The third area is coherence and coordination. The Council should play a major role in the overall coordination of funds, programmes and agencies, ensuring coherence among them and avoiding duplication of mandates and activities.

The fourth area is response to emergencies. The Council should also support and complement international efforts aimed at addressing humanitarian emergencies, including natural disasters, in order to

promote an improved, coordinated response from the United Nations. In that context, the Council will shortly convene two special events — on the food crisis in Africa and the threat of the avian flu — to activate the important role the Council can play in sensitizing the international community to existing or potential humanitarian emergencies.

The fifth area is peacebuilding. Based on the experience gained within the Economic and Social Council in the area of post-conflict reconstruction and development, the Council is expected to further promote a coordinated, coherent and integrated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction by interacting effectively with the peacebuilding commission.

A discussion of the Economic and Social Council's role in the follow-up to the decisions adopted at the 2005 summit was initiated at an informal summit meeting convened by the Council bureau on 15 September 2005. The meeting, chaired by the President of Pakistan, included the participation of several heads of State and Government; the heads of the International Monetary Fund, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; as well as senior ministerial representatives. A summary of the high-level discussion was circulated to all member States.

We will need further consideration of ways and means to ensure the implementation of the decisions of the 2005 summit to strengthen the Economic and Social Council. For that purpose, in my capacity as President of the Council, I have circulated a working paper, prepared after consultations with key delegations, country groupings and the Secretariat. The working paper offers a set of ideas and suggestions which, I hope, will provide a good basis for discussions in the General Assembly and lead to a consensus on ways and means to implement the 2005 summit decisions regarding the strengthening of the Council. I look to your leadership, Sir, in that endeavour.

In closing, I would like to stress that the Council's achievements this year could not have been possible without the excellent work of the Council's four Vice-Presidents, the ambassadors of Tunisia, Albania, Ecuador and Belgium. They carried a major part of the burden of work. I would also be remiss if I failed to recall the able and professional support of the Secretariat for the work of the Council. I express my sincere gratitude to all of them.

Mr. Oh (Republic of Korea): I thank the President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Munir Akram of Pakistan, for introducing the comprehensive report of the Council for 2005, which details the whole range of its activities. I would also like to commend the Council's progress under Ambassador Akram's able leadership.

The Republic of Korea welcomes the reaffirmation, made by world leaders in September, of the Economic and Social Council's role as the principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations in the economic and social spheres. It is our view that the Council should be a forum for serious, high-level engagement by Member States on issues of economic and social development. In that regard, we support the annual ministerial meeting and biennial high-level development cooperation forum, which we believe can play meaningful roles in helping the international community to attain the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

We also attach great importance to the recognition by world leaders that good governance is essential for sustained economic development and the eradication of hunger and extreme poverty. Today, I would like to focus on that fundamental issue, emphasizing the importance of reinventing Government and of building partnerships between the public and private sectors.

The world is changing at a pace perhaps unprecedented in history. States are striving to sustain progress towards development while coping with the new and ever-shifting economic and social challenges brought on by globalization, democratization, the information technology revolution and rapid socio-economic development.

The participants in the Sixth Global Forum on Reinventing Government, held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, from 24 to 27 May 2005, agreed that a comprehensive framework for participatory and transparent governance is necessary for sustainable social and economic development in which Government, business and civil society work together

to address challenges. Establishing such frameworks for governance will move us closer to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other global development initiatives.

The outcome document of the Sixth Global Forum, known as the Seoul Declaration, provided specific recommendations for reinventing Government, sustaining social integration, improving corporate governance, enhancing local governance and increasing engagement with civil society. The participants recognized that, in order to improve State capacity and public services, Governments must cooperate closely with various social actors, fully incorporate information technology-based strategies, and conduct performance evaluations in all areas of Government activity. They also concluded that measures must be taken to alleviate economic injustice and the negative effects of the digital divide and to prevent and resolve internal conflicts. The participants also concluded that sustainable economic development is possible through the establishment of a free and fair market order. It is therefore necessary for domestic corporations to maintain good relations with the local communities in which they operate, while multinational corporations must uphold strict business ethics.

They agreed that decentralization is a key element of good governance. To make decentralization viable, local Governments must reinvent themselves to improve participation and transparency. In addition, the participants acknowledged the importance of a more active role for civil society in decision-making processes and the implementation of public policies, and agreed to seek new ways to strengthen global solidarity on various issues.

As a follow-up measure to the Sixth Global Forum, the participants welcomed the decision by the Republic of Korea and the United Nations to conduct a feasibility study for the establishment of a United Nations governance centre in Seoul. The Government of the Republic of Korea is doing its utmost to prepare for the establishment of the centre, which will provide a forum in which States can share their experiences in the areas of good governance, reinventing Government and fighting corruption.

Finally, the participants expressed their appreciation to the United Nations Secretariat for its hospitality in offering to host the Seventh Global Forum on Reinventing Government. It is my Government's hope that the Global Forum on Reinventing Government will continue to provide opportunities for the active exchange of ideas for and experiences in designing better Governments and better futures for all countries.

Having hosted the Sixth Global Forum on Reinventing Government, the current participatory Government of the Republic of Korea is now taking steps to embrace its recommendations as we continue to reinvent our own Government for the next level of socio-economic development. We recognize that innovation is a prerequisite for sustainable development. Our goal is to create a Government that is more service-oriented, transparent, efficient, decentralized and respectful of its citizens.

As we embark on that challenging process, there is a concern that we may fall into the all-too-common pattern of promoting ambitious Government innovations, only to fall back again soon after. To avoid that pitfall, we are pursuing sustainable innovation by adopting a systematic strategy and refraining from implementing one-time external shocks, such as restructuring and downsizing. We will let civil servants within the Government take the lead in recognizing opportunities for improvement and provide ample support within the system for the implementation of their innovative ideas. Through that approach, we intend to institutionalize the engine for innovation, manage the innovation process and reduce the resistance that can derail even the most well-intentioned reforms imposed by higher authorities.

The Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs, in charge of Government reinvention, has taken the lead in creating innovative organizational cultures and internalizing innovation in all Government agencies. Examples of such innovations include the reorganization of its departments into teams, the building of a performance management system based on a "balanced scorecard" method, and the introduction of a real-time customer-relations management system. The latter garnered much praise at the International Innovation Exhibition, a side event of the Sixth Global Forum. The Ministry has also created a Government innovation index that measures the innovation level and capacity of public institutions, and provides insight into weaknesses and barriers to innovation at each institution.

Another important endeavour is my Government's proactive effort to take advantage of advanced information technology infrastructure as a major tool for innovation. The Republic of Korea's level of e-Government was ranked fifth in the world this past year. By making our Government services and information widely accessible online, we can increase our citizens' satisfaction with administrative services while enhancing transparency, thereby improving public trust in Government institutions.

The Republic of Korea is committed to the fight against corruption and views it as an essential ingredient of Government reinvention in support of sustainable development. Accordingly, the Government of the Republic of Korea has been actively carrying out anti-corruption measures. In March this year, President Roh Moo-hyun and representatives of civil society and the public, private and political sectors signed the Korean Social Pact on Anti-Corruption and Transparency, in which all signatories pledged to fight corruption in their respective sectors. Through close cooperation between the Government and the private sector, we are witnessing a dramatic reduction in corruption and irregularities throughout Korean society.

While setting up comprehensive plans to fight corruption, we are preparing to ratify the United Nations Convention against Corruption as soon as possible. We would like to encourage Member States that are not signatories to the Convention to give positive consideration to signing, ratifying and implementing it.

Let me conclude by reaffirming the dedication of the Republic of Korea to participatory and transparent governance, both at home and throughout the international community.

Mr. O'Neill (United Kingdom): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and those other European countries that align themselves with this statement.

May I begin, Sir, by echoing your words of sympathy and support to the people of Pakistan and other countries of South Asia in the light of the earthquake there. The European Commission and States members of the European Union have recently made several announcements of aid that we intend to provide and we look forward to taking part in the donor meeting tomorrow in Geneva to take forward that discussion.

I would like to speak briefly to welcome the report of the Economic and Social Council for 2005 and to thank the Ambassador of Pakistan, as the President of the Council, and his bureau colleagues for the work they have done this year and the leadership they have provided.

Over the last few months, the Economic and Social Council has made a major contribution to an important year for the United Nations. The spring meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development was an important part of the preparations for discussions on financing for development at the world summit in September.

At the Economic and Social Council's substantive session, discussion in the high-level and coordination segments on progress towards the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, provided an essential contribution to the wider preparations for the summit in September.

In the operational segment, too, we did important work to take forward work to enhance United Nations operational activities in the wake of last year's triennial comprehensive policy review in the General Assembly.

In the humanitarian segment, we had important discussions on how to ensure more effective international responses to humanitarian disaster, including lessons from the Asian tsunami of a year ago.

We in the European Union particularly welcome the decisions that were reached at the world summit to enhance the Economic and Social Council's system-wide role in ensuring policy coherence and coordination. The Ambassador of Pakistan has already set out the main elements of that, and I will not go into the details here, but I would like to underline the strong commitment of the European Union to taking forward those decisions. We hope to see early progress under your leadership, Sir.

The European Union itself will bring forward proposals and comments for that discussion. We look forward to playing a part with all other members of the Assembly in the implementation of those important conclusions from the summit. We believe that the summit rightly recognized the vital role that the

Economic and Social Council has to play, and we hope to achieve progress as early as possibly to help ensure that.

Finally, I would close by saying that we look forward to taking part in the special events later this week and next week on the food crisis in Africa and avian flu.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour, on behalf of the delegation of Belarus, to thank the President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Akram, for his professional and thorough organization of the Council's work this year. We believe the Council achieved significant success in all three key areas of its work this year: the consideration of thematic issues, preparations for the United Nations summit, and reform. In our view, that success constitutes an important step towards restoring the Council's central, coordinating role within the United Nations system in the area of international cooperation for development.

Despite the fact that the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment was not adopted, we thought that the outcome still had positive aspects, because the intensive work done at the Council's substantive session made it possible to quickly identify the most complex and pressing areas of conflict, thus facilitating preparations for the 2005 High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly.

The Economic and Social Council's special high-level meeting on financing for development was enhanced by the participation of leading officials of the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. The meeting established a good basis for subsequent consideration of the problem of financing for development in the framework of the General Assembly.

We welcome the important decisions adopted at the Council's substantive session to make further progress towards the reform of United Nations humanitarian mechanisms and to improve the operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

This year's session marked an important stage in the establishment of innovative United Nations bodies such as the ad hoc advisory groups of the Economic and Social Council on countries emerging from armed conflict. Through those groups, a basis has been laid for the Council's effective support of the activities of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Thanks to the systematic work on formulating optimum reform measures, for the first time in many years a number of important concrete measures for structural changes in the work of the Economic and Social Council were included in the report of the Secretary-General and in the outcome document of the summit (*resolution 60/1*). Belarus maintains its strong support for those innovative ideas.

Belarus also favours the adoption, following ministerial meetings, of resolutions or declarations that are more significant in both practical and political terms. We also support retaining the practice of annual thematic discussions at the ministerial level on the most pressing social, economic, humanitarian and ecological problems.

We express our appreciation of the notes of the Council President, Mr. Akram, of 19 October, which contained proposals for the implementation of those provisions. We believe that they form a good basis for the implementation of decisions adopted during the summit. We call upon Member States to consider them as quickly as possible in the format of open and informal consultations.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): I would like to begin by thanking Ambassador Munir Akram, President of the Economic and Social Council, for introducing the report of the Economic and Social Council for 2005 (*A/60/3*), which provides a comprehensive overview of the Council's work. This year, Iceland was elected to the Council and is honoured to take part in its important work. I would like to thank the President and the four Vice-Presidents of the Council and its secretariat for their excellent work and professional leadership in the extensive work of the Council during its various segments, which the report for 2005 so aptly describes.

Iceland aligns itself with the statement just made by the representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union. I will limit my brief statement to just one issue.

A wide range of key issues were addressed by the Economic and Social Council, and we have heard about them from previous speakers. They are all worthy of further deliberations here today. I shall speak

very briefly on Council resolution 2005/31, on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system. I believe that by adopting that resolution, the United Nations is creating a good precedent that should encourage all Member States to mainstream a gender perspective into their own policies, thereby advancing gender equality.

The reason I am limiting my short statement to that issue is the fact that yesterday Icelandic society came to a standstill, as Icelandic women staged a general walkout to mark the anniversary of their walkout 30 years ago. We are distributing the prepared text, and I will not read it. I hope members enjoy it.

Mr. Makayat-Safouesse (Congo) (*spoke in French*): My delegation associates itself with the statement to be made by Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

At the outset, I want to recognize the quality of the report submitted by the President of the Economic and Social Council, Mr. Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan (*A/60/3*).

In this age of globalization, the coordinated efforts and concerted action of all actors to implement the global development aims that we have set ourselves are becoming ever more necessary. In that regard, under the presidency of Mr. Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan — whose dynamism and efficacy I wish to salute — the Economic and Social Council has pursued efforts to fulfil its increasingly crucial mandate with regard to the challenges it faces.

This year again, through the links that have been established over many years with the international financial institutions, the Council provided a framework for the promotion of coherent and coordinated international cooperation on the occasion of the 2005 world summit. Through the various issues raised in our debates at the meeting in April and the substantive session, the Council made a significant contribution to the evaluation of our commitments and towards launching our consideration of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and many other international commitments.

The key issue now is how to provide follow-up to the movement launched at the 2005 September summit in order to meet the expectations of developing countries, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa, where achievements in poverty reduction remain modest. That is made clear in the 2005 United Nations report on the Millennium Development Goals, which notes, inter alia, that half of all children under the age of five are malnourished; that fewer than two thirds of children attend primary school; and that, despite modest progress in some countries, women remain inadequately represented in decision-making bodies. In turn, while the mortality rate for children under the age of five has fallen, significant progress has yet to be registered. Malaria still kills 90 per cent of those it infects, while the AIDS pandemic is claiming an ever growing number of victims.

In view of the situation, the Economic and Social Council has a crucial role to play, as previously outlined by the Secretary-General in his report "In larger freedom". The outcome document adopted by our heads of State and Government at the 2005 summit sets out specific guidelines with regard to our future actions. The Economic and Social Council must be made more effective and active in order to ensure its capacity to implement decisions. By creating a reinvigorated and strengthened Council, we will restore the dynamism necessary to the implementation of all our commitments to sustainable development and to taking the concerns of the developing world into account.

Ms. Bai Yongjie (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I wish to convey our deep sympathy to Pakistan and other South Asian nations for their suffering as a result of the recent earthquake. We will do our best to help them overcome that tragedy and to rebuild their lives.

I also thank the President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Akram, for his introduction of the report. Given the Council's work and its important role in the United Nations system with regard to economic development, I wish to make the following points on items 41, 46 and 44.

We are glad to note that the Economic and Social Council has recently carried out effective work in the economic and social fields, and held full discussions on a number of related major issues, laying a solid foundation for the success of this year's summit. At this year's substantive meeting, the Council held many round-table meetings on the Millennium Development Goals and invited experts to participate in panel

discussions on working methods within the United Nations system and on the experiences and lessons of the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. The Council's discussions have thus become more substantive and pragmatic. Earlier, it also conducted preparatory meetings for the high-level segment and its spring dialogue with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Those meetings and discussions have served vigorously to mobilize the attention and political will of all parties on development issues and to foster consensus on international development cooperation, all of which contributed to the United Nations summit. We wish to express our appreciation to Ambassador Akram, President of the Economic and Social Council, and other members of the bureau for their pioneering spirit and leadership.

The outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields have come to constitute the Organization's development agenda. The recent High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly reaffirmed relevant international agreements and national commitments, sparking the enthusiasm of all parties for fulfilling internationally agreed development goals. The development section of the summit demonstrated once again that development is a unified and comprehensive concept, with various interrelated and mutually reinforcing factors and requiring comprehensive and balanced consideration and actions. The purpose of the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences is to focus on interlinkages among conferences, mobilize various forces, and promote more effective implementation. It has been proved over the past few years that the biggest problem in follow-up activities is the huge gap between words and actions. The summit has provided us with an important opportunity by setting out a road map for the international community. It is essential for all countries and social sectors to act jointly, plan comprehensively, advance steadily, and contribute their due share.

First, achieving development involves a multi-level and complex process, and the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits cannot be realized overnight. It is necessary to define key areas and set priorities so as to mobilize maximum resources and achieve the optimum distribution of forces and the most desirable results. Thanks to the joint efforts of all countries, the Millennium Development Goals have received worldwide recognition and extensive support, and their significance has been officially confirmed by the United Nations summits. We should now focus our attention on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals as the first step towards the realization of all relevant development goals.

Secondly, action at the national level is a pivotal link in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. There is a wide spectrum of national conditions. Only by combining the consensus achieved at international conferences with their specific national conditions can countries truly claim ownership and action be undertaken realistically and effectively. National Governments have the responsibility to incorporate various international consensuses into their national development strategies and make them an organic part of their own development programmes. Constructive dialogue should be encouraged at the regional and international levels, thus contributing to the exchange of experiences, the stimulation of new thought, and the better mobilization of resources and technical means to support the coordinated implementation of development strategies at the national level.

Thirdly, the United Nations, as the chief promoter of integrated and coordinated follow-up to the outcomes of its major conferences, should vigorously mobilize all social sectors and encourage them to offer ideas and resources. If the Organization is to maintain its due leadership, its relevant meetings need to be endowed with pragmatic and effective agendas and develop innovative working methods. Related policy discussions should specify concrete policies, expand consensus and identify shortcomings and weaknesses so as to better mobilize and coordinate international action. There should be better communication and coordination among organizations and agencies to ensure policy coherence and avoid contradictions and duplication. In actual practice, countries can define the themes for exchanges and dialogues on major issues at various intervals. In order to encourage worldwide attention and the extensive involvement of all social sectors, meeting arrangements should be more flexible and diversified. The good momentum created during

the preparation for the 2005 summit should be maintained. The United Nations Millennium Project reports have evoked a strong global response. The Project's working mechanism, research and recommendations should be fully utilized.

Fourthly, effective global action needs corresponding organizational backing. The Economic and Social Council, as the main organ of the United Nations system to promote economic and social development, has special advantages in pushing for the implementation of internationally agreed development goals. The outcome document of the 2005 summit requests the Council to hold annual ministerial meetings, review progress in implementing related internationally agreed development goals, strengthen inter-agency coordination, and respond to the new development challenges. In order to fulfil those important missions, the Council needs to make the necessary adjustments, improve its allocation of resources and manpower, and reform its working methods. We hope that it will make good use of this opportunity to reinforce its coordinating functions and establish an integrated review mechanism on the basis of the reviews undertaken by the functional commissions and other agencies on the progress of various conferences and summits.

Fifthly, integrated and coordinated implementation calls for integrated and coordinated supervision. Currently, many agencies, both within and outside the United Nations system, are evaluating progress achieved on the related development goals within their own specific fields, with limited impact. We call for the establishment of a unified and comprehensive framework, led by the United Nations, for evaluating progress in the implementation of internationally agreed development goals. It would both appraise national progress and oversee and evaluate international cooperation and development aid. Though such a framework, countries can be urged to fulfil their pledges and joint efforts can be made towards achieving internationally agreed development goals.

As regards the special session on children, we welcome achievements made in recent years by national Governments, agencies and non-governmental organizations in implementing the programme of action. The advancement of the cause of children is an important benchmark of social and economic development and human progress. The Chinese Government has made it a consistent policy to adhere to the principle of "children first" and fully to guarantee children's rights to live and grow up under protection and to participate. On the basis of the fundamental principles of China's Constitution, the Chinese Government began to build a legal system to protect the rights and interests of children in the 1980s.

To fulfil the commitments it undertook at the special session on children, the Chinese Government has in recent years vigorously implemented the Chinese Child Development Programme and provided the necessary human, financial and material resources to promote children's causes. At present on mainland China, all provinces, 97.7 per cent of prefectures and 99.5 per cent of counties have formulated local development programmes for children. China has also formulated a number of policies, rules and regulations offering powerful legal guarantees of protection for poor and vulnerable children and the removal of development and gender inequalities.

Naturally, as the world's largest developing country, China still faces many challenges in the promotion of children's causes. The Chinese Government will continue to make tireless efforts to seek solutions to child-related issues and is ready to actively participate in international cooperation in that field so as to further advance children's causes and enable the children of the world to enjoy a bright and promising future.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women. At its forty-ninth session, the Commission on the Status of Women comprehensively evaluated the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on women, and adopted a commemorative declaration. As the host of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Chinese Government has also held a commemorative meeting, and the declaration adopted at that meeting has been circulated as a document for this session. We hope that, through the concerted action of all countries, efforts to achieve gender equality and to protect the rights and interests of women and children will be further advanced.

Mr. Neil (Jamaica): First of all, let me apologize for my tardiness in reaching the General Assembly this afternoon. I was delayed in the Fifth Committee,

dealing with the item on the budget for the biennium 2006-2007.

The Group of 77 and China joins in expressing our solidarity with the people of Pakistan and the other nations of South Asia that were affected by the recent devastating earthquake. We also emphasize that the needs are enormous and urgent, and should receive the substantial support of the international community.

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I wish to make some general comments on the report of the Economic and Social Council for 2005. We examined the report against the background of what has been an eventful year in the Council. We especially want to recognize the dynamic leadership of the President of the Council, Ambassador Munir Akram, and his bureau in guiding the work of the Council in 2005. His leadership brought an innovative spirit to and invigorated the work of the Council during the year.

The year has been a significant one for the Economic and Social Council. Many of the activities undertaken were geared towards providing the necessary inputs for the High-level Plenary Meeting held in September. Almost all the discussions in the Council had as their central theme the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. From the outset, therefore, there was a conscious attempt to bring focused discussion on the many critical issues of importance to the wider international community.

I will draw attention to aspects of the Council's work that were of particular importance to the Group of 77 and China.

First, as to the annual spring meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, we see great value in the opportunity to engage those institutions, whose policies have a direct impact on development. It is for that reason that we should think of ways to expand the scope of the deliberations beyond the current format. The Council must be better able to facilitate networking in the development system and to provide greater oversight in global economic decision-making. We should think of ways to strengthen the outcome of the dialogue and to expand the discussions beyond the time frame that is currently allotted.

The other important aspect of the work of the Council to which I would like to refer is its substantive session, held in June and July. We are disappointed that the only outcome of the high-level segment this year is a mere summary of the deliberations. We recognize the difficulties involved, but we would have wanted a more substantive recognition of the many useful ideas and proposals that were discussed over the three-day period. There were, for example, very constructive ideas on current trends and developments in the world economy, on the eradication of hunger and poverty, and on employment creation. Unfortunately, none of those could be reflected in a consensus document for adoption by our ministers. We hope that that situation will not be repeated in the future.

We must all work to strengthen the Council, and a simple indication of our willingness to do so should be our ability to ensure that the outcome of the high-level segment is more than a mere summary of the discussions that have taken place. It must fully capture and reflect our unswerving commitment to implementing the obligations that we are called upon to fulfil.

The humanitarian affairs segment continues to merit special attention in order to address humanitarian emergencies, including natural disasters. The devastation wrought on the developed and the developing countries alike as a result of natural disasters is a significant feature of the current year. For developing countries, the magnitude of the destruction is even more dramatic, with significant loss of life and damaged property. The recent earthquake in South Asia and the continual ravages of hurricanes and tropical storms in the Caribbean and Central America demonstrate the urgency with which action has to be taken. Special economic humanitarian and disaster-relief assistance, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 16 December 1991, has to be given the utmost priority in the work of the Council, with due regard for the primary role of the affected State in the organization and delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Those disasters demonstrate the need to strengthen system-wide coherence and to urgently implement the worldwide early warning system that was called for in the 2005 Hyogo Declaration and Framework for Action. Greater attention also needs to be given to establishing predictable funding, especially for neglected emergencies, and to reduce the gap in

terms of resource needs for emergency assistance and for aid to development.

I turn briefly to the general segment. As is customary, that segment commanded the most attention in terms of time and energy, given the volume of work to be covered during its duration. It represents an important arena through which a myriad of issues, particularly those related to the work of the functional commissions, can be considered. The real value of the general segment was sometimes lost in the attempt to ensure that the many agenda items to be addressed under the segment were completed within the stipulated time frame. As we contemplate how best to adapt the working methods of the Council to the needs of the present global environment, special consideration will have to be given to how best to use the general segment to provide better coordination and oversight of the subsidiary bodies of the Council.

One issue which we had hoped could have been reflected in this year's report of the Council concerns the situation in the Maldives. We are close to the first anniversary of the earthquake and tsunami that wreaked havoc in the Indian Ocean and the littoral States, yet the Council has not been able to take a decision to support the request of the Government of the Maldives for a delay in its transition from least developed status, made as a result of the devastation to that country arising from the tsunami. The Group of 77 and China will continue to seek an early decision on that matter.

The High-level Plenary Meeting agreed on the areas in which the role of the Economic and Social Council should be strengthened. We are now charged with identifying the most appropriate modalities to ensure that its role in its areas of competence can be strengthened. We are particularly interested in proposals to make the Council more integrally involved in policy dialogue and implementation, as well as in the promotion of development cooperation. They provide an important basis on which we can begin to expand the Council's system-wide coordination for development cooperation, as currently carried out under the operational activities segment, and to better advance the implementation of the development agenda by strengthening the link between the normative and operational aspects.

At this juncture, I should like to highlight three important issues that should guide any future work of the Council. First, with respect to preserving the intergovernmental process, we have long maintained that the Council should be given a more prominent role in advancing social and economic development. We acknowledge that civil society has an important contribution to make to the process, and while we continue to encourage such efforts, we urge that they do not compromise the primary role of Member States in the overall process.

Secondly, as we move towards better integration and coordination of the implementation of the outcomes emanating from major United Nations conferences and summits, we must be mindful of preserving the integrity of each of the respective processes. That is critical in advancing the implementation of commitments.

Thirdly, the organization of the work of the Council should allow for greater flexibility and enable the Council to consider and take action on development issues as they arise. Thematic discussions and policy issues, analysis of trends in the global economy, and reaction to emergencies should be possible within a more flexible work programme of the Council.

The Group of 77 and China stand ready to lend their full support in future discussions aimed at elaborating the new functions assigned to the Economic and Social Council. We understand that additional information will be provided next month, detailing the financial implications of those new undertakings. It is our hope that we will not allow the issue of financing to deter us from taking much-needed action in strengthening the Council. We expect that equal attention will be given to all aspects of the system as we move towards the reform and revitalization of the entire United Nations.

Mr. Karanja (Kenya): I take this opportunity, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate you, Sir, on the able manner in which you are guiding the deliberations of this important sixtieth session of the General Assembly. My delegation also wishes to associate itself with the statement made by Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the Economic and Social Council's 2005 report under consideration, as well as with the sentiments of solidarity expressed with the victims of the disaster in Pakistan and neighbouring countries.

May I also congratulate Ambassador Munir Akram, President of the Economic and Social Council,

and the entire Council bureau on their dedication and hard work in ensuring that the Council remains focused and delivers on its mandates.

As regards the work of the Economic and Social Council during its 2005 substantive session, I wish to observe that it provided an important basis for this year's world summit and the ongoing deliberations of the General Assembly. The theme of the 2005 Council session — "Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summit: progress made, challenges and opportunities" — was indeed in tune with the critical development issues at the centre of international debate.

It is noteworthy that, during the 2005 session of the Council, delegations agreed that the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals remained elusive in many countries, especially in Africa. In spite of the numerous plans and strategies that have been put in place by many countries, implementation has proved difficult due to a number of limitations that include inadequate resources.

We in Kenya have made attempts in a number of areas, such as education, health and infrastructure. The full implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals will require the concerted efforts of the international community through financial, technical and human resource support. It is in that light that we call for the creation of international partnerships that can facilitate the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Hamidon (Malaysia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

My delegation appreciates the fact that the Economic and Social Council emphasized the importance of fighting HIV/AIDS and endorsed an integrated approach that includes prevention, treatment, care, support and research. While underscoring the devastating effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on society, particularly the productive sections of the population, I wish to note that we in Kenya have taken steps towards prevention, sensitization and cure of the HIV/AIDS victims. The Government is working with various partners in the health sector and the infection rate has drastically dropped from over 14 per cent to about 6 per cent within the last three years.

Environmental protection is an important factor in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, poverty eradication and other internationally agreed goals. International environmental governance is an integral part of realizing sustainable development. While Kenya supports the ongoing process of defining the elements of international environmental governance, my delegation is of the view that it should be done within the framework of the Cartagena decision, which aims at strengthening the United Nations Environment Programme, within its current mandate, through enhanced financial and scientific bases.

Environmental protection cannot be complete without adequately addressing the issue of forest management. Forests and trees play a critical role in supporting the livelihoods of people, particularly the world's poor. Further sustainable forest management could contribute to developing economies in many ways through the provision of income, employment creation, and the fulfilment of health needs and food security. My delegation therefore calls upon the United Nations system to embrace forest management as critical to environmental management and sustainable development.

My delegation further believes that the deliberations at the Economic and Social Council's 2005 coordination, operational activities and humanitarian affairs segments, if given proper consideration, can add immense value to the performance of the United Nations system. The deliberations at the 2005 session highlighted key challenges and opportunities in the endeavours to implement the Millennium Development Goals and the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. We therefore need to build on the consensus that emerged in order to make a difference.

Some of the issues that emerged that require attention include the understanding that the Millennium Development Goals and other major outcomes of key United Nations conferences and summits constitute a comprehensive development agenda for the international community, and that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed goals has been uneven in terms of both the goals and the regions. With due

respect for those challenges, my delegation appreciates the fact that the international community has shown a new spirit of shared responsibility in moving ahead with the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed objectives.

Under the coordination segment of the Economic and Social Council session, the contribution of the United Nations system towards the follow-up and implementation of the internationally agreed development goals was reviewed. Ways and means of improving the Council's coordination functions were discussed. My delegation fully supports the recommendations that were made towards improving the way the United Nations system works in relation to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In particular, we recommend that efforts be made to enhance the link between the United Nations agencies and regional commissions in the field, to distinguish between coordination and integration functions in the field, and to adopt a multi-year programme for the coordination segment.

In addition, it is our hope that the theme of the 2006 coordination segment — "Sustained economic growth for social development, including the eradication of poverty and hunger" — will generate discussions that will add value to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

My delegation recognizes that the United Nations has a unique capacity and opportunity to provide neutral and flexible support to countries in their struggle to implement the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed goals. That uniqueness is enshrined in its power to engage various stakeholders at the country level, its distinctive advocacy role, and its analytical capacity on complex social and economic issues. It is in that regard that my delegation supports the need to strengthen and integrate the operational activities of the United Nations system.

In harmonizing the operational activities of the United Nations system in the field, it is important that consideration be given to either merging or reducing United Nations agencies. That can go a long way towards presenting a unified image of the United Nations through all its operations in the field.

At its 2005 session, the Economic and Social Council exchanged views on the transition from relief to development and on issues of special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance. In light of the increasing humanitarian and disaster assistance requirements occasioned by natural disasters, it is important for the United Nations to review its approach and preparedness in handling the same. My delegation therefore supports the need, among other things, to establish reliable funding mechanisms, including through the consolidated appeals process and the improvement of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund by including a grant facility component, as was proposed during the deliberations of the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. Aghazadeh (Islamic Republic of Iran): May I start by associating my delegation with the statement made by the Ambassador of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Sixty years after the adoption of the United Nations Charter, the role and mandate of the Economic and Social Council remain more relevant than ever before. The Council still plays a major and vital role in dialogue, coordination, cooperation and policy-making in the economic and social fields. At this juncture, numerous old and emerging challenges are before us. Many internationally agreed goals and targets, including the Millennium Development Goals, are supposed to be met by 2015.

Lack of coordination and cooperation and even failure in a few areas could make our efforts fruitless and prevent the achievement of the MDGs as planned. There are certain commitments enshrined in the outcomes of regional and international agreements that deserve action and implementation. The current situation and the need for progress to be monitored by an appropriate forum show how critical and decisive the work of the Council will be in the years ahead in tackling the challenges. The Economic and Social Council should therefore be strengthened so that it can address adequately and comprehensively all of the parameters involved in development.

The reform of the Economic and Social Council in the early 1990s, with the creation of various segments, helped the international community to categorize the main mandates of the Council and, in that context, to address global challenges in a more effective and efficient manner. Fortunately, the role of the Economic and Social Council as enshrined in the Charter was recently reaffirmed in the Summit Outcome document. That

document recognized the need for a more effective Economic and Social Council, as the principal body for policy dialogue, policy review, coherence, coordination, development cooperation, emergency response and recommendations on issues relating to economic and social development. The document also recognized the role of the Council in implementing the international development goals agreed at the major United Nations summits and conferences, including the Millennium Development Goals.

My delegation believes that, in order to make the required progress in implementation of the MDGs, the Council should, as a matter of priority, review trends in international development cooperation at the envisaged biennial high-level Development Cooperation Forum, in accordance with paragraph 155 of the outcome document.

National reports on progress made, reports of the United Nations regional commissions and relevant international organizations, and a comprehensive and analytical report on the basis of those reports, as well as high-level representation and active participation by Member States and heads of international organizations, could provide a basis for assessing progress and identifying gaps and constraints at each meeting of the Forum.

Having experienced a great many high-level gatherings and forums, both inside and outside the United Nations system, I can say that participation and exchanges of views alone will be insufficient to enable us to reach the goals within the envisaged time frame. A strong will for cooperation and implementation on the part of the politicians will certainly be needed. Coherence and coordination should not be limited to bodies affiliated with the United Nations. The international financial institutions, including the Bretton Woods institutions, should adapt themselves to the trends and policies set out in the General Assembly, which enjoys global membership and has a democratic decision-making process.

The implementation of the commitment of the developed countries to allocating 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to official development assistance by 2015 and the establishment of a timetable for that commitment by those countries that have not yet done so will be key to the success of the Economic and Social Council in fulfilling its mandates.

We appreciate the role of the Economic and Social Council in mitigating the impact of natural disasters and coordinating the humanitarian response so far, but much remains to be done in terms of preparedness and strengthening the international humanitarian response to natural disasters. As members are aware, the devastating impact of the growing number of natural disasters is inflicting considerable and unexpected damage on the affected countries. With each occurrence, a significant portion of the available human and financial resources is diverted from development to relief and recovery efforts. The international community in general, and the Economic and Social Council in particular, should address natural disasters in such a way that efforts to meet the MDGs are not drastically affected. The Maldives is an example of a country that was deprived of graduation from least-developed-country status, despite long-standing development activities, as a result of the tsunami that took place last year in the Indian Ocean. That showed how vulnerable the developing countries are vis-à-vis natural disasters and highlighted their growing need for attention from the international community.

In conclusion, the politicization of economic and social development through the use of unilateral coercive policies and measures continues to hamper international efforts for the creation of a favourable environment for development and the eradication of poverty at the national and global levels. There should be changes to and improvements in the way we view global problems and their causes. We firmly believe that the universal recognition of development as a right, together with a sincere commitment to efforts for its achievement, will significantly contribute to poverty eradication and better standards of living, and thereby to the maintenance of peace and security throughout the world.

Mr. Atiyanto (Indonesia): Our delegation joins the President and other representatives in expressing our deep solidarity with and sympathy for the peoples and the Governments of Pakistan, India and Afghanistan, which have been severely affected by the recent earthquake. Indonesia joins other members of the international community in expressing our continued readiness to ease the burden of our brothers and sisters in Pakistan, as well as in India and Afghanistan.

There is no question that the Economic and Social Council plays a vital role in coordinating the implementation of international development goals agreed at major United Nations international conferences and summits in the economic and social fields. That is evident from the report of the Economic and Social Council on its work in 2005, as contained in document A/60/3. My delegation would like to sincerely thank Ambassador Munir Akram for having introduced the report of the Economic and Social Council for 2005. In this regard, my delegation also shares the views of the Permanent Representative of Jamaica, who spoke on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The 2005 world summit opened a new window of opportunity for strengthening the role and function of the Economic and Social Council in coordination, policy review and the provision of recommendations on issues relating to economic and social development. In this regard, the additional responsibilities assigned to the Economic and Social Council should made it more effective and responsive to various development challenges.

In light of the expanded mandate of the Economic and Social Council, my delegation sees the need to identify modalities that will facilitate its implementation. In doing so, the President of the General Assembly, together with the President of the Economic and Social Council, should arrange the necessary consultations to obtain support from all Member States.

Once again, it is of paramount importance that such consultations always be conducted in an open, transparent and inclusive manner. It is also critical that those consultations consider the relations between the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly and the Security Council in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

The 2005 world summit has further endorsed the mandate of the Economic and Social Council to stay engaged with all stakeholders at the national, regional and global levels. We hope that such engagement would focus on practical and action-oriented outcomes, especially to support developing countries in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

We also highly value the role of the Economic and Social Council in supporting and complementing national, regional and global efforts to address humanitarian emergencies, as in the case of natural disasters. That would require flexibility in the Council's programme of work to meet and to make recommendations for emergency situations. In that regard, coordination between the Economic and Social Council and its functional and regional commissions, United Nations funds and programmes, and national Governments, is indispensable.

We also must not lose sight of the important role of the Council's secretariat. In our view it needs to be strengthened to provide deeper analytical and administrative support for the substantive deliberations of the Council.

Mr. Chulkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to take this opportunity to again express our condolences to the people of Pakistan and to other countries victims of this shattering earthquake. Like many other countries, Russia immediately sent its experts, doctors, special equipment and field hospitals to provide humanitarian assistance to the afflicted regions. Allow me to express our confidence that at tomorrow's international conference in Geneva, the international community will once again show its support to the people who have suffered from the earthquake.

The Russian Federation is pleased with the results of the work of the Economic and Social Council this year. In our view, the Council has reaffirmed its role as the central body for the discussion of development issues and as the key coordinating body for the work of the United Nations system in socio-economic and environmental areas.

The Council's substantive session, as well as its preparatory phase, made important contributions to the preparations for the 2005 summit. Although Member States were unable to agree on a draft ministerial declaration for the high-level segment of the session, the negotiations on the subject were, in our view, extremely useful. They allowed for detailed discussions on a broad range of issues on the socio-economic agenda of the summit and helped to clarify the positions of Member States, including on the most sensitive issues, leading to agreement on many elements which then formed the basis for subsequent discussions.

We also approve of the work of the operational and humanitarian segments of the session. It is of the greatest importance that the decisions adopted there

allowed for progress in determining the competencies of the General Assembly as the body that establishes political, system-wide directions, and the Economic and Social Council as the organ that coordinates their implementation within the framework of the United Nations system.

We welcome the strengthening and enhancement of the interaction between the Economic and Social Council and the international financial and commercial institutions. The practice of holding annual high-level meetings of the Council, the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has again demonstrated its usefulness and must be continued, taking into account the prerogatives, mandates and modalities for decision-making in all of the institutions involved.

Important work this year also included the informal discussion on the reform of the Economic and Social Council. Although there were divergent positions, a common understanding of mutually acceptable elements was reached, which made it possible for the Council to develop a block of decisions for the outcome document. Here we would like to note the leadership role in that area and in organizing the work of the Council of the President of the Economic and Social Council this year, the Permanent Representative of Pakistan, Mr. Munir Akram.

The ideas put forward in the outcome document of the 2005 world summit regarding the Economic and Social Council create the potential for strengthening the political significance, the role and the effectiveness of the Council. At the core of our work must be the establishment through the Council of a forum for cooperation for development and for carrying out ministerial assessments of progress in implementing the results of the major United Nations conferences and summits. We support the holding of such a forum on a biannual basis as part of the high-level segment of the Council's substantive session, in light of the need for strict compliance with the balance between New York and Geneva.

It is extremely important to reach a common understanding among Member States regarding the ministerial assessments of progress in implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The decision of the summit on this issue must not result in a cumbersome new process that needs a lot of time and a great many resources to monitor compliance by countries with the goals agreed on the international level. That would duplicate existing mechanisms — such as individual processes for implementing the results of United Nations conferences and summits — or instruments such as national reports on implementation of the MDGs. We also find inadmissible the revival, in the guise of implementing a decision of the summit, of the idea of holding peer reviews.

On the whole, the summit decisions presuppose implementation of reform steps within the main parameters of the present format of the work of the Economic and Social Council. We are aware of the possibility for further enhancing the effectiveness of the Council's work, for example, through optimizing the agenda of the substantive segment of the session.

However, we are opposed to a radical review of the format and working methods of the Economic and Social Council, which would go beyond implementation of the decisions of the summit. There can be no possibility for dividing the Council's substantive session or for reducing its length, or for the establishment within the Council of executive committees or management groups which are not provided for under the existing rules of procedure.

The optimum format for discussing specific modalities for the implementation of the summit's decisions on the Economic and Social Council is, in our view, to work within the framework of the organizational and, when necessary, the substantive session of the Council itself in 2006.

This does not, however, mean that informal discussion must definitely be postponed until next year. We have read with interest the working documents recently distributed by the Permanent Representative of Pakistan, which contain a number of specific initiatives for the implementation of the decisions of the summit regarding the Economic and Social Council. We are ready to participate actively in the informal meeting of the Council proposed therein for an exchange of views on this subject and for the establishment of a basis for future work in that area.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 41.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

Second report of the General Committee (A/60/250/Add.1)

The Acting President: I should like to draw the attention of representatives to the second report of the General Committee contained in document A/60/250/Add.1. In the first paragraph of the report, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that the item entitled "Observer Status for the Hague Conference on Private International Law in the General Assembly" be included in the agenda of the current session under section I, Organizational, Administrative and Other Matters. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this item in the agenda of the current session under section I?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The General Committee further recommends that the item be allocated to the Sixth Committee. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to allocate this item to the Sixth Committee?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I should like to inform members that the item entitled "Observer Status for the Hague Conference on Private International Law in the General Assembly" becomes item 158 on the agenda of the current session. The Chairman of the Sixth Committee will be informed of the decision just taken by the General Assembly.

Agenda items 46 and 44

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Note by the Secretary-General (A/60/275)

Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children

Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/207)

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now consider, in a joint debate, agenda item 46, "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields," and agenda item 44, "Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children". In connection with agenda item 46, the Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General transmitting his updated report on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, circulated in document A/60/275.

Under agenda item 44, the Assembly has before it a report of the Secretary-General circulated in document A/60/207.

Mr. Neil: (Jamaica): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, under agenda item 46, "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields".

I wish to thank the Secretary-General for the reports submitted for our consideration. We look forward to future discussions on the various reports. Some of the issues of concern to the Group of 77 and China were highlighted during the recently concluded substantive session of the Economic and Social Council. I wish now only to highlight some points that should be taken into account in our further consideration of this item.

First, the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits requires that all relevant United Nations entities review their priorities and programmes in accordance with the relevant provisions of the relevant outcomes. We hope to receive more details on concrete actions already taken to support the implementation of the decisions, especially those related to development, that were adopted at the High-level Plenary Meeting, which concluded recently. We believe that the Secretariat has an important role to play at the technical level in ensuring that resource flows to developing countries are facilitated. Timely assistance in the adoption of country-level strategies and programmes and in the

identification of funding sources will also be very critical.

We therefore anticipate very active participation by the Secretariat in monitoring the release of donor resources and in supporting measures for greater aid effectiveness. Equally, at the level of policies, we expect continuous review of how global economic policies to support development are reflected in the commitments given at the summit and previous conferences.

We recognize that efforts will have to be made to bring those entities not directly under the jurisdiction of the United Nations into the discourse on how best to mainstream development in their respective policies and strategies. We understand that this will be the main focus of the next meeting of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, scheduled for 20 and 29 October.

At the same time, we would like to highlight one area of concern. In the ongoing work to be undertaken by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the relevant funds and programmes, the Chief Executive Board and the United Nations Development Group, adequate oversight arrangements will have to be in place to ensure that the activities are monitored at the inter-Governmental level. For the Group of 77 and China, it is imperative that the outcome of Secretariat deliberations in the field of development should be appropriately reviewed and considered by Member States.

With regard to management reform issues, we will be awaiting the Secretary-General's proposals on a range of issues for consideration in the Fifth Committee. The approach of the Group of 77 and China will be to assess those proposals on their merits as reforms aimed at improving the efficiency and performance of the Organization in the interests of all States. We intend to do so carefully and objectively, regardless of the pressures to satisfy particular interests. The position of the Group of 77 and China will continue to be determined on that basis.

That is the end of the statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 46.

I should now like to make a statement on behalf of Jamaica on agenda item 46, "Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children", in my capacity as the Permanent Representative of Jamaica.

Three years have passed since the General Assembly adopted its decision to work towards "A world fit for children" (*resolution S-27/2*). The Assembly's assessment of implementation of the commitments made on that occasion is taking place in the context of the coordinated follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits. That is most appropriate because mutually reinforcing global development agendas seek to ensure the protection of children's interests in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.

In her recent presentation in the Third Committee, the representative of UNICEF identified some of the challenges facing the implementation of critical programmes for children. Among them are weaknesses in institutional capacity, budgetary constraints and the existence of conflict and instability. She also identified some of the possible ways forward: the establishment of high-level national councils for children, capacity-building to strengthen national child agencies and collaboration with parliamentarians and civil society organizations to promote child-focused budgets. We concur with that assessment.

Implementation of the commitments of "A world fit for children" is among the national priorities of Jamaica. Our support for that outcome document is one of a number of initiatives to which we are committed in order to promote and protect the welfare of children. We have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. Our involvement and leadership at the regional level includes the hosting of the 2000 regional conference on children, which adopted the Kingston Consensus.

The outcome document "A world fit for children" called for the development of action plans for children. In that regard, the Government of Jamaica has established a national plan of action as an institutional framework for addressing and enforcing children's rights. To complement that action plan, domestic legislation in the area of children's rights has been enacted, the most important of which is the landmark Child Care and Protection Act, adopted in 2004.

Shortly after the special session, the Child Development Agency, headed by the first Ambassador for Children, was established. The Agency was given the responsibility of achieving the holistic development of children through the creation, implementation,

coordination and regulation of programmes and policies aimed at fulfilling Jamaica's obligations. The Child Development Agency is also working on public education, social mobilization and community outreach in order to help citizens understand what their responsibilities are and to equip them to be better parents, among other things.

In addition, the Agency has adopted a multisectoral approach in developing policies that relate to and affect children. They include the national plan of action on children, the national plan of action on child labour and the new policy framework for street children.

The Government of Jamaica has undertaken to achieve the minimum targets relating to reducing infant and maternal mortality and has made significant strides in that area over the past few years. It has effectively reduced severe and moderate malnutrition among children under five years and has an extensive, ongoing immunization programme. Additionally, access to safe drinking water has been improved.

The Government is committed to providing quality education, providing free, compulsory education at the primary level.

With a view to implementing a comprehensive policy to counter violence against children and protect their rights, a child-specific national human rights institution has been established. Other initiatives include the establishment of a juvenile unit in the police force, as well as a victim support unit in the Ministry of National Security to assist child victims of violent crimes.

We remain fully committed to the goal of combating HIV/AIDS, but significant challenges remain. We are pleased that, as a result of the provision of anti-retroviral drugs to more women, there has been some progress in reducing the rate of mother-to-child transmission. But, while we note the success in that area, we remain concerned about the rate of new infections among women and, in particular, young girls. That means that the battle continues and that there is need for an injection of even greater resources to achieve our target of reducing the proportion of infected infants by 20 per cent by 2005 and by 50 per cent by 2010. The need for adequate resources is critical to support the political commitment that is already assured.

We commend the role of UNICEF in helping the country meet its national objectives, particularly in the area of the fight against HIV/AIDS, in response to the rising number of cases of children orphaned by the disease.

In all our efforts, we are committed to the involvement of non-governmental organizations and civil society, which we believe can play a useful role in monitoring the State's implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We owe it to our children to provide them with a safe haven fit for them to inhabit as they make their transit into adulthood. My Government remains fully committed to achieving that.

Ms. Kidwai (India): At the outset, please allow me to thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to express our views on the critical task before us, namely, the implementation of and the follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, in particular, the decisions of the 2005 World Summit. We believe that effective follow-up to and implementation of decisions is often as important as the decisions themselves, and we therefore take the task before us seriously.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome (*resolution 60/1*) included a number of key decisions designed to improve the functioning and performance of the United Nations. Those included, inter alia, a commitment by all Governments to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015; the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council in a time-bound manner; the conclusion of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism; the strengthening of the United Nations oversight capacity; the scaling-up of the international community's response to infectious diseases and other emerging health challenges; support for early reform of the Security Council; and agreement on the deletion of anachronistic references to "enemy States" in the Charter.

At the same time, much of the work initiated by the preparatory reports of the United Nations reform process has been left incomplete. There is a need for the United Nations to provide direction on issues such as debt cancellation, the achievement of official development assistance targets, foreign direct investment flows, the transfer of resources and environmentally-friendly technology to facilitate

sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The World Summit Outcome reflects agreement to work expeditiously towards implementing the development dimensions of the Doha Work Programme but did not provide clear, comprehensive political direction to the World Trade Organization's Doha Round. Such direction could set the stage for the success of the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization to be held in December 2005. The growing impasse shows that such political direction is needed. We need to rectify that situation.

For satisfactory progress on United Nations reform, the question of distribution of economic and political power in the United Nations, including in the Security Council, also needs to be addressed. As the Secretary-General has stated, no reform of the United Nations can be complete without reform of the Security Council.

The President of the General Assembly has attached utmost importance to the follow-up to, and implementation of, development issues in the 2005 World Summit Outcome. He has stressed the need for political momentum on development to be maintained and strengthened. He also pointed out that the United Nations, in particular, had to play its part in ensuring that the international community has in place appropriate ways and means to achieve the timely and full realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

He noted that the General Assembly's ongoing work had to include items such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), HIV/AIDS, migration and arrangements for reviewing the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, and that the outcome document had invited the Secretariat to undertake work on system-wide coherence this year, with the aim of improving the way United Nations development, humanitarian and environment activities were managed and coordinated. We agree with the approach taken by the President of the General Assembly to the work that lies ahead, particularly as concerns follow-up to the development aspects of the outcome document.

The main purpose of the 2005 world summit was to review the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. Unfortunately, most countries will not be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), given their current levels of growth and the level of international support they are receiving. Efforts have to be made at both the national and international levels to reach the targets set. While both the Millennium Declaration and the outcome document have spoken of exploiting the beneficial aspects of globalization, agreement on and implementation of the modalities is still lacking. Making the process of globalization fairer and more equitable remains one of the main challenges of our time. One achievement made by the G-77 was progress on systemic issues critical for good international economic governance. That progress has to be built upon.

Monitoring the progress made in the implementation of MDG 8 by developed countries is an integral part of the monitoring of the MDGs as a whole. Therefore, country-level reports by developed countries with regard to progress on commitments to developing countries remains important. It is essential to ensure that commitments to provide additional resources are implemented without delay. We also believe that debt stock cancellation should be complemented by sharp increases in official development assistance, in keeping with the Monterrey Consensus. The outcome document, in the context of commitments and initiatives aimed at enhancing resources for the development agenda, recognized the progress made on the Innovative Financing Framework for Immunization (IFFI). Operationalizing the IFFI is particularly important, since frontloading aid will enable many recipient countries to overcome the initial bottleneck in pursuing the MDGs.

However, no implementation scheme should obscure the fundamental objective, namely the rapid economic growth of developing countries so as to enable them to meet the MDG targets, especially with regard to reducing poverty and increasing employment. The implementation of the agreements contained in the outcome document should lead to the creation of a more favourable international economic environment that would be more supportive of development efforts.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome document has given impetus to the development of a strong counter-terrorism agenda. In accordance with the outcome of the world summit, our priority must remain the conclusion and adoption of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism early in this session of the General Assembly. We welcome the Secretary-General's offer to make available to the General Assembly an updated version of the element

of his previous strategy, and we would be happy to lend our full support towards the adoption of a counter-terrorism strategy after the comprehensive convention is adopted.

We also appreciate the formation of a counter-terrorism implementation force and the Secretary-General's plan to submit proposals by early 2006 to the Security Council and to the General Assembly to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system to assist States in combating terrorism and to enhance coordination. We caution against duplication of work and mandates, given the plethora of bodies that are currently engaged in this exercise in the Security Council and elsewhere in the United Nations system.

To overcome the marginalization of the developing countries, their empowerment through reform of the Security Council remains imperative. India will continue to work with like-minded countries to reach the broadest possible agreement for an expansion of the permanent and non-permanent categories, to respect deadlines, and to bring the reform process to an early and successful conclusion.

India looks forward to working with the President of the General Assembly in his efforts to complete work on the other unfinished reform agenda, as contained in the outcome document. This includes working through informal consultations of the plenary on the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. India welcomes the establishment of the Commission and hopes that it can begin its work before 31 December 2005. We also support negotiations with a view to concluding, during the early part of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, work on establishing a Human Rights Council.

The doubling of the regular budgetary resources of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) should respond to the broad mandate of human rights, especially in augmenting capacity-building and offering greater technical assistance to Member States at their request. The activities of the Office in the area of greater country engagement should not automatically result in an increase in its personnel deployments — rather, it should focus on improving the institutional capabilities of the country concerned. The interaction of the OHCHR with other relevant United Nations bodies should be coordinated in order to mainstream all human rights, including the right to development. The activities and programmes of the OHCHR should address, in a balanced manner, not only civil and political rights but also economic, social and cultural rights. Additional resources should also be used judiciously to streamline reporting procedures and extend technical assistance to Member States for capacity-building.

We note from the report that the United Nations Development Group will finalize the strategy and work plan on strengthening the role of the United Nations special representatives, resident coordinators and humanitarian coordinators, and resident coordinator and country-based coordination systems by January 2006. A report on progress will be provided in the Secretary-General's annual report to the Economic and Social Council in 2006. We look forward to examining that report. We also expect the Secretary-General to apprise Member States of the next set of operational reforms to further strengthen the management and coordination of United Nations operational activities.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome called for the General Assembly and other relevant organs to review all mandates older than five years and take decisions based on that review during 2006. The expectation expressed in the Secretary-General's report (*A/60/430*) that all relevant organs and specialized intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations will complete that review in time for action in the first quarter of 2006 seems overly optimistic. That report also states that the resulting strategic framework for the forthcoming biennium will be submitted to the Committee for Programme and Coordination in August/September 2006. We assume that an additional session of the Committee is being proposed, since that Committee has not taken any decision on postponing its substantive session from June/July 2006.

We welcome the urgency with which the issue of strengthening the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) is being treated. However, in the haste to carry out the recommendations of the outcome document, it would be a pity if we were not to seek the views of OIOS itself on the areas that require strengthening and on the extent of reform.

We are also puzzled to note that a separate, independent external evaluation of the Office is contemplated, something which was not mandated by the outcome document. That document states quite clearly that the external evaluation will focus on the

entire auditing and oversight system of the United Nations and specialized agencies in the context of the comprehensive review of the governance arrangements. We do not believe that a piecemeal approach such as that proposed has any merit. We also look forward to receiving proposals from the Secretary-General on the other aspects of management and Secretariat reform as mandated in the outcome document.

We have carefully examined the report of the Secretary-General containing the third update on progress made in follow-up to the Assembly's special session on children (*A/60/207*). We agree that most of the goals of "A world fit for children" (*resolution S-27/2, annex*) will be achieved only through a greater intensification of action for disadvantaged children and families throughout the world. Examples of rapid progress in individual countries and regions have demonstrated that accelerated progress is possible, but current efforts need to be expanded and better supported through resource allocations.

Mr. Hasan Malek (Malaysia): On behalf of the Malaysian delegation, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report containing the third update on progress made in follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children (*A/60/207*). We are pleased to note that Governments are taking substantive measures to pursue the goals aimed at creating a world fit for children, as envisaged in the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the special session of May 2002 (*resolution S-27/2, annex*).

The outcome document of the special session on children focused especially on promoting healthy lives, providing quality education, protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence, and combating HIV/AIDS. While considerable progress has been achieved in certain areas, setbacks have occurred in others. We note the assessment in the Secretary-General's report that while by 2004 many countries had taken concrete actions to translate the commitments made at the 2002 special session into national action plans and policies, the overall rate of progress had been uneven. We are heartened to note that the situation now seems to be more encouraging.

While a clear and genuine effort is being made to strengthen partnerships within the international community to improve child survival and promote healthy lives, much remains to be done to achieve the targets set under the Millennium Development Goals. Similarly, greater efforts are required to promote the other goals set at the special session, namely, providing quality education, protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence, and combating HIV/AIDS.

Some of the obstacles to achieving the goals contained in the outcome documents of the world summit and the special session on children include the lack of resources, debt and the decline in international funding to implement identified programmes. Those are clearly development issues and have to be addressed if we are honest in our conviction to further the promotion and the protection of the rights of children.

In that regard, my delegation commends the invaluable support and commitment demonstrated by the relevant United Nations development agencies in their activities to assist and support Member States in implementing the policies, plans and programmes proposed by the special session's Plan of Action. We urge the relevant United Nations agencies to continue their efforts to assist developing countries in establishing and strengthening their national capacities and institutions for the promotion and the protection of the rights of children and to achieve the goals set at the special session on children. Malaysia continues to participate in some of those efforts at the regional and multilateral levels.

At the national level, many of our efforts have been carried out in the context of our second National Plan of Action on Children for the period 2001 to 2020. The Plan, whose theme is caring for the children of Malaysia, was formulated in conformity with the nation's vision of achieving the status of a fully developed nation by 2020 and implementing the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and of the outcome document of the special session on children. The Plan sets out a broad framework of actions and measures to address all areas of concern affecting on social and developmental needs, as well as the protection of the rights of children.

Since our independence, Malaysia has consistently made a conscious effort to make quality education the cornerstone of the national agenda. The national education policy is oriented towards providing basic education for a minimum of nine years. Girls and boys have equal access to educational opportunities, with the enrolment rates for the two genders almost at par —

50.4 per cent of boys and 49.6 per cent of girls — except at the level of tertiary education, where girls have a higher rate of enrolment.

Having put in place educational facilities throughout the country for the disabled, the Government has now made primary education compulsory for all.

With a rate of 98 per cent enrolment in primary school, the Government has now moved a step further by embarking on the provision of quality education to ensure that children have access to the best system of instruction to enable them to cope with the rapid progress of the information age. Efforts in this regard include modernizing schools, providing well-trained teachers and equipping all schools with computer laboratories and information and communications technology equipment.

To promote healthy lives, Malaysia is constantly upgrading its medical facilities and programmes and has allocated 1.3 billion Malaysian dollars for this purpose in the 2006 national budget. There has been a steady decline in maternal and neonatal mortality in Malaysia, which currently stand at 0.2 and 5 per 1,000, respectively. Health and community clinics set up throughout the country, which provide services such as immunization and normal development assessment for children, ensure that the child is in optimum health.

Malaysia is committed to the concept of total rehabilitation for disabled children. This entails a multidisciplinary approach whereby the Department of Social Welfare provides rehabilitation services for disabled children through institutional services, with the Ministry of Health providing technical inputs. The Department has also forged small partnerships with non-governmental organizations by supporting them financially in the administration and management of the institutional centres they operate.

Concerning the protection of children against abuse, exploitation and violence, Malaysia's Child Act 2001, formulated in line with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, sets out provisions for the care and protection of children. A court for children has been established, which allows the affected child to participate in discussions and deliberations in court. In the area of child abuse, Malaysia has developed mechanisms for child protection, care and rehabilitation by setting up intersectoral Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect teams at district and state hospitals. A milestone in preventive measures is the establishment of child protection teams, which are involved in multiple programmes run by the community and for the community. Among other things, they run parental education activities and serve as counselling centres.

Having identified action against commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of children as one of the priorities in the region, Malaysia is mindful that this challenge cannot be surmounted by any single country acting alone. In this regard, Malaysia subscribes to the Declaration on the Commitments for Children, adopted in 2001 by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Under this Declaration, ASEAN has drawn up cooperation programmes in the areas of child trafficking, child prostitution and intercountry adoption. At the same time, programmes have been put in place to provide alternative family care arrangements for the victims of child abuse, neglect and exploitation, as well as to address the special needs of children with disabilities.

Recognizing the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS, which poses serious health and developmental challenges to humankind and which disproportionately affects the young, Malaysia gives serious attention to combating HIV/AIDS. Although the reported cases of HIV infection are relatively few compared to our population, the Malaysian Government continues to give serious attention to measures for combating HIV/AIDS. The Government has taken a comprehensive and integrated approach to deal with this problem, which includes preventive measures, care, support and treatment for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. In that regard, the Malaysian Government also works very closely with non-governmental organizations.

Malaysia believes that the well-being of children and women is a reliable indicator of a healthy society and of good governance. In this respect, the Malaysian Government will continue to promote and facilitate the rights of the child, especially in the areas of protection, development and participation, and to create a favourable and enabling environment towards the goal of a world truly fit for children.

Mr. Soe (Myanmar): Sir, may I first of all say how happy I am to see you, current Chairman of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), presiding over this important meeting. My delegation

fully associates itself with the statement made by the Ambassador of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. I shall therefore confine my statement mainly to agenda item 44, follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children.

Three years ago, the special session of the General Assembly on children adopted a Declaration and Plan of Action entitled "A World Fit for Children". Since then, the international community has come together to protect and promote the cause of children. But we cannot be complacent. According to the Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme, every hour of the day, over 1,200 children die around the world, most because of a preventable disease called poverty.

Five years ago, the leaders of the world adopted a comprehensive and detailed set of human development objectives — the Millennium Development Goals. The strong focus of the Millennium Declaration on the lives of children gives added impetus towards attainment of a world fit for children and has led to the convergence of national planning processes around a common set of goals. Both the Millennium Development Goals and "A World Fit for Children" aim to reduce infant and under-five mortality rates by two thirds by 2015. Presently, only a few countries are on track to attain those goals. The Human Development Report 2005 projects that if current trends continue, this goal will be achieved only in 2045.

In an era of globalization, when technology, trade and investment have advanced dramatically, it is disturbing that 6 million children die annually of diseases that could be prevented or effectively treated. They die because simple yet high-impact and cost-effective interventions that could prevent their deaths remain beyond the reach of their families, particularly in the developing world. Effective national action complemented by sustained assistance from the international community is needed to reverse that trend.

In Myanmar, we are making great efforts to promote the health of the children. Under-five mortality rates have dropped from 130 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 66.6 per 1,000 live births in 2003. We aspire to reach the target of 38.5 deaths per 1,000 live births by 2015. The decline in prenatal, infant and child mortality rates during the past two decades is the result of the implementation of the national health plan, which provides increased access to primary health care, increased immunization coverage, promotes oral rehydration therapy and emphasizes the Making Pregnancy Safer initiative as a high-priority component of the reproductive health strategy.

Access to safe drinking water and sanitation also has an important bearing on child mortality rates. In Myanmar, a safe drinking water supply programme for water-scarce rural areas has been carried out for years and will continue. According to multiple indicator cluster surveys, access to safe drinking water has increased from 32 per cent of the population in 1992 to 72 per cent in 2000. Access to improved sanitation has also increased during the same period, from 36 to 83 per cent.

In today's world of abundance, it is regrettable that more than 1 billion people survive on less than $1 a day, 208 million of whom are youth. While increased official development assistance is an effective tool for fighting poverty, solutions also need to be found for improving market access for developing countries. Unfair and unbalanced trade rules greatly hamper efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the goals set out in "A world fit for children" (*resolution S-27/2, annex*).

In Myanmar, as part of our efforts to achieve economic growth and social progress in line with the MDGs, three national development programmes are being implemented to achieve balanced development and to narrow the socio-economic development gap existing between rural and urban areas. The three programmes are the border area development programme, the 24 special development zones plan and the integrated rural development plan.

We believe that education is the key to progress and poverty alleviation. In Myanmar, to achieve the goal of universal primary education, we have implemented Education for All activities since the 1996-1997 academic year. In accordance with the Dakar Education for All goals, a national plan of action was drawn up in 2003. As a result of such efforts, the school enrolment rate of children five years and older in the academic year 2004-2005 was 96.56 per cent, the net primary school enrolment rate was 84.5 per cent and the primary school completion rate was 74.5 per cent. The number of primary, middle and high schools has increased from some 34,000 in 1992 to more than 40,000 in 2004. Efforts have also been made

to improve the quality of education. The reform of the official curriculum and assessment methodology has been undertaken, and the use of information and communication technology is strongly encouraged.

The border areas of Myanmar have lagged behind in development due to decades of armed insurgency, which led to the absence of an effective education infrastructure and created barriers to education. The lack of education opportunities resulted in more violence, creating a vicious cycle. Today, that cycle has been broken. Because of the Government's national reconciliation efforts, 17 armed insurgent groups have now returned to the legal fold. Now that peace and stability have returned to the border areas, the Government has been able to provide education for the children residing there. Fifteen years ago, there were a mere 28 schools in the border areas of Myanmar; today there are 790 schools, with more than 120,000 children currently enrolled.

In an effort to ensure that no child is left behind, two nationalities youth resource development degree colleges affiliated with major universities have been established. There are also 27 training schools for the development of nationalities youth from border areas. Nineteen domestic science vocational training schools for girls and women have been established in the border areas, and more than 14,000 girls and women have benefited from the vocational training provided in those schools.

Since the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (S-26/2, annex) was adopted, there has been stronger leadership at all levels, and new resources have been mobilized. The global commitment is unprecedented. However, greater efforts are needed if the international community is to halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015.

Where HIV/AIDS is declining, it is primarily because young people have learned to practice safe behaviour. In Myanmar, life skills training and social development for youth is conducted by the national AIDS programme in coordination with national non-governmental organizations. In collaboration with UNICEF, the Ministry of Education developed a school-based healthy living and AIDS prevention education kit in 1997. Since then, the programme has been adopted as part of the official curriculum and is taught at all levels, starting at the primary level. The programme has also been expanded to key groups outside the formal education system.

In today's interconnected world, assistance to developing countries to fight HIV/AIDS is not just a moral imperative but an investment for a common future. HIV/AIDS poses a serious challenge to the global community and it is a challenge that can be successfully addressed only through the cooperative efforts of the entire international community.

I conclude by reiterating Myanmar's firm commitment to the goals set by the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields. Myanmar stands ready to work together with others in the international community to implement them. By fulfilling those common goals, we will also be creating a world fit for children.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I wish to advise members that the informal consultations on the Peacebuilding Commission, which were announced for tomorrow afternoon, are postponed to a later date. The time and venue of those consultations will be announced shortly.

Next, I wish to inform members that at 9.45 a.m. on Thursday, 27 October, there will be a meeting of the General Committee to consider a request by Spain for the inclusion of an additional agenda item, circulated in document A/60/233.

I also wish to inform members that at the request of the sponsors, the joint consideration of agenda item 11, the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict, and agenda item 12, the prevention of armed conflict, originally scheduled as the second item for Monday, 31 October, will be postponed to a later date, to be announced.

The meeting rose at 6.00 p.m.